

THE
JUDGMENT
OF PEACE



ANDREAS LATZKO





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THE JUDGMENT OF PEACE

THE JUDGMENT OF PEACE

A NOVEL

BY

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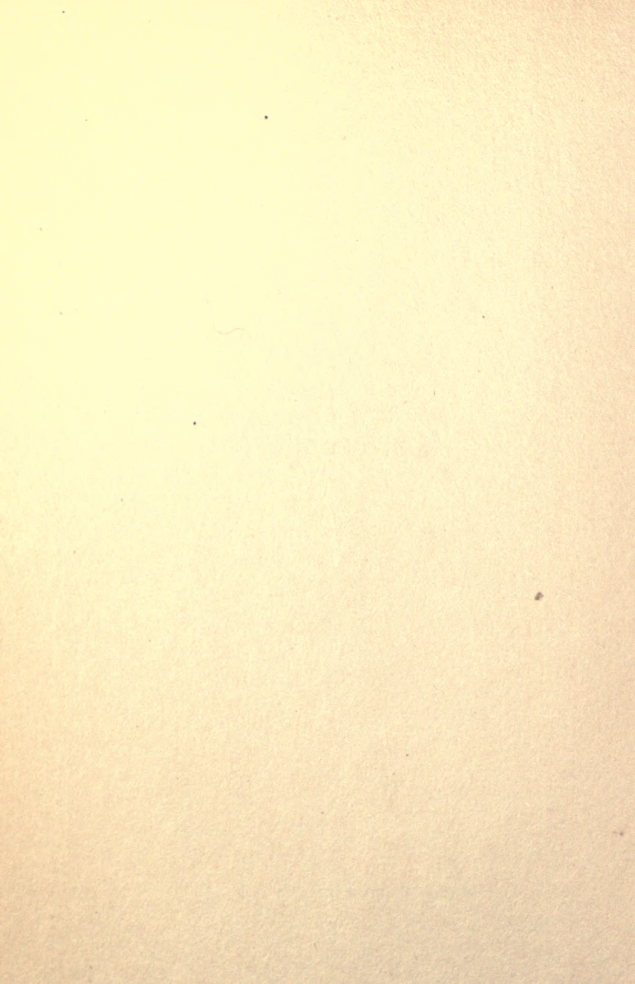
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TO
ROMAIN ROLLAND
MY GREAT COMPATRIOT
IN THE LOVE OF MAN



VIVOS VOCO
MORTUOS PLANGO

I
FIELD GREY

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I.

FIELD-GRAY

FULLY equipped to go out, George Gadsby sat on his bed, letting his legs swing and staring with sharply compressed lips out into the open. A pallid blue sky curved above the black, snow-splotched fields; the sparrows were noisy in the bare poplars in front of the barracks; the mild wind that blew into the room through the open window affected every limb with a sweet, languorous weariness as though Spring were at the door and not the festival of fir-trees and snow-covered roofs.

It was the last Sunday before Christmas, the so-called "golden Sunday" of the shops: the first Christmas-tide of the war period. That monstrous event had not yet thrown any shadow into the land. No need or compulsion oppressed those who had stayed at home; only the empty chairs at the family gatherings emphasized a gentle melancholy in the midst of the time. A fever had all Germany in its grip, a frenzy of

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gratitude. Every one eagerly took advantage of that Christmas as of the first opportunity of sending a word of love to the dear tormented ones out there. Any spectator, wandering through the streets, would have come to the conclusion that all the treasures of the city were being quickly packed up to be sent out to the field-gray children who had so honestly earned their Christmas treat at the hands of the homeland.

But this tide of generosity and adoration rolled carelessly past one place—the barracks. The recruits saw the crowds surge in front of the little post-office next door; they saw the paste-board boxes of all sizes stream thither and then proceed on in pyramids; they stood at their windows, envious and arguing. Even the most stupid felt dully the contradiction between the stormy impulse of people to honor the defenders of the fatherland, and the treatment that was given them in the barracks. Often when the drill sergeant had been particularly rough with one of them and the drill was over, the bitter jest could be heard in the room: "It's a good thing my old woman can't hear the way I'm dealt with here. There'd be no discipline at home after that!" Then they would laugh and outdo reality by supposing grotesque possibilities; but behind these jests there crouched a secret but mighty anger against the whole fate of the war that had torn mature men from the decent dignity at-

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tained by hard effort and had placed them in the moral position of their own sons.

George Gadsby, too, felt crushed, torn out of his real self, degraded to the level of a shabby, beaten sneak. He had just calculated that the iron field-cot on which he sat had now been for exactly nine weeks all that he knew of home, and with a shudder he compared the man who now answered to his name to that other one who had entered the barracks filled with a joyous determination and a proud readiness for sacrifice. What had they made of him? Instead of surveying as from a superior station those who still clove to the old, commonplace life as though they were unaware of the great conflict that raged in the field, he looked with a corroding envy upon every civilian who knew the barracks walls only from without. He hated, yes, hated this mill that ground out of one every bit of pride, of will, of the consciousness of one's true self.

He arose with a groan and listened to the solemn stillness that filled the house. The evening before the men who had been granted leave of absence had marched off in columns to the station; only the "city-fellows," who had neither field nor family, had remained even during the holidays tied to the post like rebellious foals. He had been envious even of these peasants! He would have been glad to change places with any one of them, only to escape for a few days to a

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place beyond the reach of the drill-sergeant's voice. . . .

With slothful, dragging steps he wandered through the room, wretchedly depressed, profoundly disgusted, his hands involuntarily held away from him as though he were afraid of touching his own body. The Prussian mason, who had the bed to the right of him, had infected him with his horrible comparison. "Wipes his nose on us!" the man would say whenever Sergeant Stuff poured out over the battalion the vials of his wrath. And it seemed to Gadsby as though this image had penetrated him with an insufferable feeling of inner uncleanness and violation. He was forced to think of the dirty towels that every one in passing could use. God knows, his soul, too, bore the finger-prints of all his superiors. . . . In all the thirty-three years of his life his sensitive personal dignity had not been so wounded as in these nine weeks. And why? Because of his own free resolve he had assumed the heavy burden and had volunteered for military service. That was the reason for which he was now forced to see himself affronted, degraded, shamed, held in contempt by common, narrow-minded creatures. What an act of madness had he been guilty of!

Full of grim rage he sat farther back on his bed and dug at his wounds. What had impelled him toward the fateful step? On all sides he had been advised against it; to the last moment

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influential friends had offered to liberate him from the obligation he had assumed; stubbornly he had held fast to his resolve. How could he suspect that things would come about thus? . . . The mad, seething indignation arose in him again at the memory of his introduction to the barracks when at once, as though to enlighten him as to his position, the arrogant voice of the sergeant fell on his ears and he, George Gadsby, but a few moments ago the famous pianist whom reigning sovereigns invited to their board, stood as if he had been struck in the presence of those innumerable servile grins. Instead of the respect which was due to his determination, he met venomous scorn; as though he needed to be doubly humiliated for the greatness of his renunciation, for his ability, for the position in life that he had conquered. His colleagues, however, who were "kind enough" to play a few pieces for the benefit of some war charity, reaped a harvest of warm gratitude for their sacrifices in all the papers.

Outraging all rules and regulations he threw himself fully on the hard cot and closed his eyes.

Didn't Mathilde share his guilt just a little, after all? Although she denied it, she had, during those first days, become again wholly the daughter of her Prussian officer father; she had hastened to the window with glowing eyes whenever troops passed by; she had waited for hours for telegrams in front of the newspaper bulletin

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boards. Everything went too slowly for her, every one was too lukewarm, too indifferent. The whole South German atmosphere made her nervous. She would have preferred to hasten to Berlin at once, so estranged did she suddenly feel herself from the city she had loved so deeply. Externally, of course, everything went in its wonted groove; he escorted her to the theater and called for her later when the rehearsal was over and she offered her lips for his kiss. But it was like a passion embalmed, like a receipt given for a happiness once enjoyed. The artist in her who had transcended all prejudices, had broken for the love of him with all her noble kinsmen—she had vanished. There remained the Baroness von Moellnitz! What could the virtuoso Gadsky, what could his strumming mean to her? Infected by the blind exaltation of those days she confused war with the pageantry of the victor, and saw only banners and arches of triumph where reality marked the path with graves and hills of mangled men? . . .

Now to be sure she averted her face from the unheard-of butchery! Now she, too, declared it to be a crime that he should waste his hands—his “incomparable” hands, as she used to say—on a rifle that any one else could fire as well. To-day she acknowledged again the rights of art as well as of war. Should he have waited patiently until she found her way back to him? Should he have insisted shamelessly upon his

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due, like a creditor? . . . Was it strange that he should have caught the intoxication of her mood?

With a sudden start he sprang up, smoothed the bed quickly and resumed his wandering about the room. No! By heaven, no! Had he sunk so low as to take moral refuge behind a woman? Was he to roll off the responsibility for his deeds upon his beloved? . . . God knows, these were queer results of this institution for the training of men! It taught its pupils trembling and dread in the matter of buttons and chevrons and insignia to prepare them for an heroic mood!

He drew himself up proudly and hurled the mean suspicion far from him. He himself was guilty and he alone. It was his insane ambition, his arrogance, his passion for always playing for the highest stakes that had driven him into this adventure. Had the war come a year earlier or a year later he would have reconsidered this step many times. Only in this special year, at this fatal moment, the temptation should not have come to him!

He had just come home. He lay in the harbor, slothful and without desires, with all sails slackened. He had brought with him a wealth of shining memories and had nothing to ask of the future. No dream could equal the reality of his immediate past. Three incomparably successful concert tours had filled the past three years. A triumphal progress through America, an extensive trip through Russia had loaded him down

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with such a mass of roubles and dollars that he sometimes suspected it to be impossible that so much money could be honestly gained! . . . He made himself a home that realized the fulfillment of his wishes to the smallest detail. The books that he had gathered from the ends of the earth were clothed in precious bindings and framed his daily life. . . . Only one worm gnawed at the core of his happiness. He had lately lost his mother and there was no one with whom he could share his marvelous fortune. Then quite by chance, in Paris, where they treated him like an uncrowned king—he met Mathilde. And before they had attained a full awareness of it, they were caught in each other's web of life. She gave herself to him, careless of her repute and name as though these were the merest trash. For in her there stormed the heavy, stubborn passion of women who are late to awaken. She wanted no support but that of his arms. He was shamed by the greatness of her sacrifice. He set all possible influences in motion and did not rest until, with a radiant and protecting delight, he could go to her with her appointment at the Court Theater in his hands.

Thus Spring found them under one roof, separated only by decent concessions to conventionality, and their days flowed on like a river that digs its bed deeper from day to day but also flows on ever more broadly and slowly.

And thus there lay behind him as a height that he had truly conquered all that he had set

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himself as his farthest aim of fairy-like and unimaginable splendor—he, the station master's son in the grimy mining village.

So at the age of thirty-three he was satiated with life. The years promised only the collection of more money for more concerts.

Then came the war!

Before him there stretched suddenly a new way, the un hoped for possibility of beginning over again. It was that which had been so seductive—that only! To stake his whole self with all he had attained on the hazard of war, to hurl himself into this ocean of field-gray drops that devoured every one who was not strong and brave and manly enough to work himself up—how could he have withstood this temptation of proving himself and conquering life anew?

A dream had been his fate—the dream of returning to Mathilde a hero, an officer glittering with decorations, a man who had twice conquered the world! . . . He had run into destruction as blindly and as rawly as a foolish boy who has read “Robinson Crusoe” and sneaks away from his father's house by night. Now he was in the trap, the thongs held fast, and he stared back to the freedom he had so rashly thrown aside!

Burning with rage he stopped in the middle of the room. He glanced over at the two others. They, at least, had no reason to torment themselves with self-reproach. They had obeyed a command and an iron compulsion. Full of ha-

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tred he observed Fröbel, who was just packing up his razors and humming a song and who now slipped on his gray military coat. If only a kindly fairy had shown him this obliging, intimidated little common school teacher. He would have been saved. Of course, he would have laughed any common mortal to scorn who would have come to him with the impossible prophecy that this poverty-stricken, cowardly creature would get the better of him in the army. In the army! In an organization which, according to his mistaken notions, demanded above all an independent spirit, proud self-confidence, stubbornness and endurance of mind and could have no patience with flatterers and lick-spittles.

With clenched fists he turned away and approached Weiler, who sat on a trunk in front of the second window, bent over the proof-sheets of his second volume. Wasn't it curious that precisely these two men to whom he had spoken the very first day, when they were still awaiting admittance at the gate of the barracks, should constitute his whole society? . . . He recalled that cold, foggy morning, the shivering figures with their hostile eyes, his own terror at the sight of these men who were to be his daily companions. Blunted and abused by life, they stood there as though they were dragging heavy weights, neglected in soul and body. And from the midst of this somber crowd there had arisen an odor as though one had just opened a cellar door. . . . The envious glances that had met his elegant gar-

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ments had made him feel naked; his eyes had yearningly sought in that mass for some kindred soul from his own world.

Thus he had found Weiler, nervously huddled against a pillar. He had taken him to be a humble, good-natured bank-clerk. And there had arisen in him a great cry of joy when he had found in him the exquisite, self-willed poet whom he had so often defended against the judgment of the uncomprehending. At once a magic circle had been drawn about them; they stood as upon an island, in the protection of their common interests. Their isolation had allured Fröbel, whose girlish timidity had made him the butt of coarse jesters. He had remained faithful to them in spite of the shadow which their unpopularity with the officers cast upon his unblemished conduct. And this devotion forced Gadsky to a more charitable view of the man's weaknesses.

"Are you going already?" he called out to him, astonished, as he saw him going toward the door in his cap, coat and side-arm.

"To be sure!" Fröbel answered happily. "Sergeant Stuff has kindly permitted me to go without reporting to him first."

Gadsky lowered his head to hide the bitter smile that stole into his face. By God, that was the right man for these people. Not even in the great man's absence did he dare to omit the formulas of respect in uttering his name. His bearded face was radiant over the gracious permission accorded him as if he were a pupil in

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his own school and not a teacher and the father of a family.

"A non-com in the making! Do you realize that?" Gadsby called out jeeringly to Weiler and pointed to the door which had just closed behind Fröbel. "The only one who is being found worthy. It is probably assumed that a man accustomed to wield the ferule will strike the right note in dealing with us recruits. Would you have dreamed that precisely his qualities are supposed to adorn the warrior?"

Nervously he paced the room and then added, with a wave of anger: "It's a disgrace that they promote a fellow whose eyes water at the mere notion of going into the field, the worst coward in the whole battalion, simply because . . .

Weiler had folded up his manuscript and gazed with astonishment into Gadsby's bitter face.

"Why do you use that ugly word?" he interrupted him quietly. "What's the meaning of that word—coward? When poor Fröbel hears people talk about an attack or about grenades he simply can't help seeing his own body dead or dreadfully mutilated. His imagination summons up these repulsive visions. He can't help that. Were he able to see himself coming safe through every hail of bullets and returning home as a hero and decorated—why, he wouldn't be a coward any longer. It's a matter of temperament. Even the old artillery Colonel Bonaparte grew pale when the grenades came up near him

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the first time, and when an old ruffian of a general asked him ironically whether he was scared, he gave the immensely superior answer: 'If you were half as scared as I, General, you would have taken to your heels long ago.' "

Gadsky shook his head. "The comparison between Napoleon and Fröbel strikes me as rather bold." He was irritated. "It depends, after all, on what one has to lose—the crown of France or Fröbel's two-room apartment. I don't, of course, mean to compare myself to Napoleon, but I do risk somewhat higher stakes than Fröbel. For ten long years they jeered at me and beat me around at home to get what they called foolish notions out of me. Then, for ten more years I was as pitiless to myself as an animal trainer to his beasts, driving myself back to the piano again and again. And then, at last, the goal I had dreamed of was reached. Then one day George Gadsky himself sat as a passenger in the Orient express that he had seen flitting by the little station daily, and himself flitted by the scenes of his torment, the walls and bushes that had seen him weep and grind his teeth! Measure my loss! Consider what it means to have conquered, to have become oneself a sort of express train that rushes past saluting masses of men on tracks cleared for its coming. . . ."

"Do you believe that, to him, poor Fröbel's life means less. . . ?" Weiler did not continue. The speech seemed suddenly to snap off. Gadsky followed his friend's eyes and became petri-

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fied in the attitude of "attention" at the sight of the sergeant who had just noisily pushed open the door and entered. At once the room was filled with a breathless silence as though an extraordinary tension proceeded from the stocky, broad-shouldered man—a tension that might snap at any moment. His little, suspicious eyes hunted flickeringly in all corners, glided over the beds and shelves, seeking some infraction of regulations. Then Sergeant Stuff, snorting softly, came very close up to Gadsby and remained standing there. Instinctively he felt the hatred that met him and his own hostility was thus kindled at once. Up to the very door he had been in the best of humors and had firmly determined to be gracious and, as an exception, to make no difficulties for the two black sheep. Christmas was at hand, most of the recruits were absent on leave, there was little work in the empty house, and this in itself softened him. Also, he had won at cards in the morning, had been invited to a birthday party for the rest of the day—in short, he hadn't any taste for playing the ogre. But the mere sight of Gadsby, the aloof and determined carriage of the man's head, unchained his anger anew and all his round body seemed to contract as though to overwhelm the opposition that arose in such silence before him.

Sergeant Stuff was nothing less than a tormentor of his men. He considered himself rather kindly and charitable so far as it was consonant

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with his own dignity and the difficult task of drilling some discipline into the annual hordes of raw recruits. He nourished, in fact, a sort of inner ambition to be known as a "fatherly" officer and the aggressive pride of this damned strummer enraged him utterly. He was accustomed to forbid the man as punishment to go out, to let mercy prevail at the last moment, and in that case to get his proper due in the form of a humble and grateful glance, at least. That the war had brought him so many recruits who were bundles of old bones was repulsive to himself; it would not persuade him to alter his system. Gadsby's consciousness of personality, his silent refusal to adopt an attitude of adoration toward "his sergeant"—this whole negative attitude composed of pride and malicious conscientiousness in matters of duty would have to be conquered. A recruit who refused to be treated by his sergeant with condescension and indulgence, who received every familiarity and every jest with an icy seriousness, was a stubborn dog who had to be hustled about until he would eat out of your hand. What right had the rascal to stare with eyes full of gall and hatred, as though he saw the fiend incarnate, at the excellent Papa Stuff whom all his soldiers loved?

"I'll manage to show you!" he hissed, without any introduction, fairly into his face. And his forehead grew positively scarlet as Gadsby remained faultlessly standing there without a trace of pallor, but on the contrary with a malicious,

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cold contempt in his eyes. "You'll find out who of us is the stronger!" the sergeant completed his threat and went over to Weiler to gain time. For a moment Stuff felt tempted to be serious for once and spoil this pig-headed fellow's holidays for him thoroughly. Only his instinctive feeling that it was easier to break this man's bones than his will, caused him to dismiss the plan again. He inspected Weiler quite superficially, pulled his coat straight, informed him that he desired his shoes to shine more brilliantly in future, and waddled back to Gadsby with a divided mind.

Again it became so silent in the room that each man could hear his pulses beat. In that interval Stuff had decided upon merely a small reprimand. After brief consideration he put his hand on the middle button on Gadsby's chest. "Why hasn't this button been polished?" he roared.

Gadsby remained silent.

"Are you deaf?" Stuff's voice made the very windows rattle. "Why didn't you polish your buttons properly?"

"I beg to report that I have polished them," Gadsby answered with icy calm.

The sergeant foamed. The practice of long years had enabled him to *feel* that a button which he didn't desire to be polished was dirty, even if his eyes discovered no evidence of the fact. "Polished? You call that polished? If you don't report to me in fifteen minutes, downstairs in front of the sentries, with shining buttons, you'll

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stay in the barracks—to-day and on the two Christmas holidays. Understand me?"

"Yes, sir."

He heard the words as he slammed the door thunderously behind him and, sweating with excitement, went down the stairs to his wife, who was awaiting him at the gate. With a wild grunt he informed her that she would have to wait a few minutes and ungraciously turned his back to her.

He was dissatisfied with himself. Why had he been betrayed into making a scene again? What sense was there in it? Such ways made the fellow only more stubborn. Either one must go at him thoroughly, or not at all! Either let him dangle till he crashed down, or . . . He considered thoughtfully all the methods at his command and threw murderous glances at his wife as often as she passed him. The whole nasty mess was her fault. It had been her idea to order the newly arrived strummer to report in their dwelling to play something for their guests, two cavalry non-coms. and their wives. When, thereupon, the fellow had the impudence to declare that the piano was too out of tune for him to play on it—it had cost six hundred marks!—and also to pretend that he, a famous virtuoso, didn't even know the song: "Baby, you are my eyes' delight," which his guests had wanted to hear—well, nothing had been left but to let him go his ways. They had been made to look like fools before the cavalry men, who hadn't spared

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them some pointed remarks. What could one do against a man who refused a favor to his sergeant instead of being honored by the chance? He had no right to force him in this matter which was strictly beyond the jurisdiction of the service. But the man would have to learn what it meant to behave arrogantly toward one's immediate superior! . . . And from that time on there was no halting the matter, which grew worse from day to day. The fool carried himself more haughtily the more one tried to humiliate him: he wouldn't yield, and yet he would have to be taught some sense of inferiority. It would have to be done. Stuff clenched his fist and assured himself that there was no other way out—none!

"Is it that there Gadsby again?" his wife lisped, full of curiosity and of pity for her poor, plagued husband who couldn't even enjoy his Sundays in peace. But the answer that hurtled over her made her consider it more advisable to withdraw. And so she awaited the possible fulfillment of her hopes at a short distance.

Before her husband had led her from the kitchen of his regimental commander to the altar, Mrs. Stuff had been for years cook in gentlemen's families, and her desire to be avenged for the humiliations she fancied herself to have endured still flamed high in her heart. She never neglected an opportunity to let well-groomed, graduate volunteers, the spoiled sons of her former tyrants, wait as long as possible in

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the corridor or at the door for the sergeant. And she had, of course, little pity for this conceited fellow who had made her look foolish before her guests. Her delight was great when the hated wretch really appeared and, on the open street, under the vivid attention of passing civilians, received his thunderous reprimand. A proud satisfaction radiated from her red face as, arm in arm with her mighty lord, she rustled past the sinner who stood rigidly at attention.

Gadsky ran off so swiftly that Weiler's short legs had difficulty in keeping up. "I didn't touch the buttons!" he cried and his voice trembled with suppressed rage. "Didn't touch them! And yet suddenly they were bright enough. But the man's made a mistake. He can't down me with such chicanery."

"He may not be as ill-intentioned as you fancy," Weiler said soothingly. "You might better, in God's name, have played a bit for him that day."

"What should I have done?" Gadsky stormed. "Perhaps I should have been highly honored? Why? Pray tell me why? Because I came to him of my own free will that he might teach me how to shoot, to throw a grenade and whatever else the practice of war demands? No, my dear fellow! Let them torment me all they please—I shall remain the man I was and am. A self-respecting man who, after all, has learned and achieved something, cannot suddenly count for nothing simply because he has slipped into this

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strait-jacket!" And, after a pause, he added grimly: "If he weren't so stupid he would thank me for defending the dignity of his calling even against himself! But I know what I'll do. I'll talk to Ensign von Krülow. This very day. I won't let this damned non-com. annoy me any further."

Weiler didn't answer. He knew that Gadsby was far too proud to lodge a complaint. Also too wise to place von Krülow in so embarrassing a position. For the experienced old sergeant was far more highly valued by the captain than the boyish ensign who was far too indulgent to his inferiors. It would be the last straw to have him take the part of the recruit against the drill sergeant!—By the time they reached their goal Gadsby would no longer think of complaining to Krülow. It seemed strange to Weiler that the words and actions of a common, stupid fellow like Stuff could really touch the soul of a man of Gadsby's rank. But did he not still walk beside him with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes? . . . Ah, one must weave oneself into one's own web. One must hide oneself beneath a protective covering of one's own dreams and thoughts; one must let all this military life with its limitations and its brutalities pass by one unconcernedly like a vision. Of course, that, too, annoyed the others! Weiler smiled when he thought of the impotent rage that his dreamy preoccupation often aroused in those about him.

Silently they hurried, each employed with his

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own thoughts, through the busy turmoil; they rode for a long part of the way in the overcrowded tramway, still without exchanging a word. They did not really become aware of each other again until they climbed the stairs that led to Mathilde's apartment. On the second floor they had to pass the door with the dull brass-plate that bore Gadsky's name. He turned away, and yet his eyes seemed to pierce the wall and to caress, in imagination, the books on his shelves. His tread became heavy. As though constrained by tender arms he had to drag himself to the next landing where he cried out to Weiler in a tone of annoyance:

"I wish you wouldn't run so!"

But at bottom he felt flattered and a satisfied smile wavered on his face. Whoever had once fully found his way into her little home always returned thither like a pilgrim to his patron saint.

He had no doubt but that the little ensign was upstairs already.

"Why don't you come?" Weiler asked him, leaning across the balustrade.

"Immediately! Immediately! Just ring the bell!" he replied with gentle sarcasm.

Every one hastens to her like a child to its Christmas tree—he said to himself proudly. And the bell seemed to tinkle like the bell that calls children on Christmas Eve to their gifts.

In the anteroom there hung next to the ensign's coat an ulster of rough material and a

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felt hat with a worn rim. "That damned Dorn-dorf has settled down inside already!" Gadsby grunted. Weiler smiled wearily. "Then there will be a dispute again," he said, shrugging his shoulders. But while he took off his overcoat he added good-naturedly: "After all, he's a faithful soul. We nearly destroy him every Sunday and he turns up again as if nothing had happened."

Gadsby nodded contemptuously. He had always hated this so-called uncle, and since the war had come he had with difficulty restrained himself from putting the man out without ceremony. Somehow or other he was related to Mathilde and was immensely taken with his own liberality in overlooking her well-known relations with Gadsby. As a matter of fact, he was attracted by the exquisite meals, the complimentary tickets to the opera and the other little comforts which a postal official of middle rank cannot indulge in even if he is a widower. In addition he was proud of the association.

In the eyes of his cronies at his favorite inn Mathilde von Moellnitz was, after all, a scion of a noble house and her title as member of the Imperial Opera had quite another importance there than it had among the members of the von Moellnitz family. His niece's way of life he had screened by attaching to Gadsby—to the latter's profound vexation—the appellation of "intended." Moreover, since her appointment as leading alto to the Imperial Opera he wore a broad-brimmed felt hat and a shabby artist's tie.

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At the first moment Gadsby felt seriously tempted to turn back. After the undignified scene with Stuff he didn't feel the least inclination to let the "uncle" excite and worry him too. For since August the old man had let the military situation go to his head and boasted as uninterruptedly as though he had shattered the gates of Liège with his own fist. Was it worth while to be drawn into an angry mood again by this old donkey?

He was about to stretch forth his hand after his cap and coat when the door opened and Mathilde appeared with the tea-urn in her hand. An immediate languor passed through Gadsby as he saw her erect in her exquisite slenderness in the frame of the door and drew in from afar the indescribable, faint fragrance of her. He no longer thought of leaving. But a stubborn, almost malevolent feeling of opposition, a dull, little ache of hatred arose in him and mastered the tender longing which had brought him to her door. Every Sunday this inner conflict was renewed. . . . Always the deep yearning for her which helped him bear all the unworthy annoyances of the barracks, and made of the six days only one weary road to the redemption of this moment—disappeared and was changed into an angry revulsion. Of course he told himself that his disappointment would be far greater if one fine day she were to appear plump and ill-groomed and neglected in order to adapt herself more perfectly to his calloused hands and entire

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condition. He knew very well that he couldn't bear the sight and would think her foolish to want to look like a cook just because he happened to be looking like a cook's sweetheart. And yet at every meeting he was overwhelmed by the ugly little suspicion that she didn't let herself feel his fate very keenly. . . . To be sure, it took only a few minutes for this inner enmity to disappear. The peace that radiated from her uplifted him and the sergeant, the captain and the barracks sank into nothingness. But when Monday came, it was devilish hard to become once more the infantryman Gadsby and when another week was gone that strange hostility had grown again. She greeted Weiler first and let him pass her into the room. Tenderly she drew Gadsby close to her and ran her hand through his hair.

"Take care," he said, "you'll ruin your lovely frock!" He stepped back and his lips became hard and narrow. But the frightened look that met his was so full of understanding and sympathy, that he at once regretted his words, raised her slender, fragrant hand to his lips and kissed each finger separately.

Desire enfolded them like a great mantle. Their eyes closed and they sank away from the world. Then he, still breathing deeply from that contact, went in to the others. He shook hands with the ensign and passed Dorndorf with a frown. The forced, distrustful friendliness of the old hypocrite drove him to a cold resistance.

"I'm surprised you're so happy to-day," he

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called out to him. "You haven't won a single victory all week."

"I will again! Don't worry! Give me time!" Dorndorf replied with a sweetish grin and glanced at him hatefully afterwards. "I am just hearing to my regret that you haven't had a very pleasant week either!" He pointed to Ensign von Krülow whom Weiler had just been informing of Stuff's latest shamelessness.

"Do let that go! I didn't ask you to be my defender," Gadsby said harshly and tried to lure Mathilde away from the others. He didn't like to have her learn of his sufferings; he felt shamed before her like a punished child. "Come, dear! Don't worry about all that nonsense," he begged insistently. But she had caught the first words and eluded him and went to the others with her little head slightly bent forward and her nostrils vibrating.

Then he became seriously vexed and called out indignantly to Weiler: "Why don't you complain of your own fate? Heaven knows you're not less tormented than I!" He turned away angrily, as though the whole conversation didn't concern him, strolled to the piano and began to improvise very softly. In his heart he was deeply touched by Weiler's zeal. The poor fellow with his fragile, powerless limbs suffered more than any other. Every night he broke down in exhaustion and in the guise of a "measly rag" and a "lazy hound" enjoyed the particular attentions of the captain. And yet he bore it all with the

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dumb patience of a Buddhist saint. Yet his indignation flamed up over every injustice suffered by others. Now again he stormed against the whole system of arrogance and violence with a passion that abashed the uncle, so that the latter's replies sounded like the breathless cries of a swimmer against the stream.

"Precisely you have no right to say that—you of all people!" Weiler was saying in an outraged tone. "Discipline is an entirely different thing. And why do you always seek help from some perfectly stereotyped word like that? Stick to the point and tell me why the pianist George Gadsby whom no one dared with impunity to call an idiot or an ass, who would permit no one to treat him boorishly so long as he was a civilian—why this same man is robbed of every shadow of his sensitiveness and honor? That, I suppose, is your idea of the especial respect which you are always demanding for the field-gray garb of honor? Gadsby is, in the name of that, to be insulted and brow-beaten by a fellow who, in civil life, might conceivably rise to be a janitor, until he leaves for the front. Then, to be sure, Sergeant Stuff remains behind in order to continue his fearless attacks—on new recruits."

Dorndorf's face took on an expression of ugly delight. He had been a bureaucrat in a subordinate position all his life and had had to bow down and scrape before others. It gave him a secret joy to have these gentlemen of the so-called

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liberal professions complain of the force that oppressed them.

"My dear fellow," he said with quiet satisfaction, "this is a time that demands some sacrifice of every one. One man loses his secure existence, another, like Mr. Gadsky, must give up his liberty, a third must deliver his sons to the state, like myself. Do you think it's easy for me to sit here with the consciousness that at any moment I might get a telegram from the country around Ypres or from Poland? Do you know the trouble and the money it took to get two boys to the point where one might expect some joy of them at last? And now, if it's God's will, they may be crippled for life, or I may never see either one again. It's my opinion that one sacrifice is worthy of another. Or do you believe I wouldn't much rather let your Mr. Stuff hound me?"

Gadsky had listened with an annoyed shake of the head and had expressed his impatience through thunderous chords. Now he was surprised that everything was so silent behind him. For when once Weiler's temperament had been thoroughly aroused, his timidity was quite gone. And surely this answer of Dorndorf's was a challenge. He stopped playing and turned around, for the silence was still continuing.

He saw that Weiler was alarmingly pale. There was something crouching in his attitude. His eyes were fastened on Dorndorf. One could see the struggle that passed within him, that

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he made effort after effort to speak and yet, ere the words reached his lips, recoiled from them.

"For heaven's sake, don't eat me up," the old man jested with an uneasy vibration in his voice.

Then suddenly Weiler made a gesture of liberation, threw aside all scruples with a determined movement of his shoulders and said: "I can't—I can't bear to hear that falsehood any longer! It's time that we spoke out. . . ."

"Falsehood?" Dorndorf was frightened. "Where do you see any falsehood?"

Weiler stepped back a trifle. His knees trembled with excitement. "Didn't you say yourself just now that it took a long time until one could take any joy in one's sons? When does that time come? When they are happy and well settled in life? Yes. But in addition your paternal pride wants its sop too. Or would you deny that there are parents who desire their own vanity to be satisfied? Think of the many who drive their dull children to study, who would rather see them break down under the burden than deny themselves the satisfaction of having sons as learned as their neighbors! Consider how often children are plunged into misery because they seek happiness in some marriage that does not satisfy the pride of their parents! How often—tell me yourself—how often do parents become the enemies of their own flesh and blood because the children's chosen calling wounds their vanity. Right in this room there are three of us, thrown together by chance. Let Gadsky

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tell you how, to his last breath, his father couldn't forgive him for having become an artist; ask Mr. von Krülow who wanted to be a painter and hated nothing as he hated force of any kind, by what means he was driven to enter the army! And I? It would take hours for me to tell you of all the little tricks and underhanded bits of malice to which my mother resorted—yes, my own widowed mother—because I had turned my back upon my father's honorable calling. Just three of us, you see. And are we exceptions? Rare exceptions? Do you believe that? I tell you that the contrary experience is almost the exceptional one. Most men go about the education of their children quite as they go at any other undertaking. For two decades they sacrifice their money and care. Then they present a bill. Most of them desire to be able to say with self-satisfaction: 'My son took his doctor's degree to-day,' or 'he has been made chief of his governmental department, or councilor, or director, or has married the daughter of the wealthy Mr. So and So.' That was the situation in times of peace. To-day the circumstances have changed. Whoever wants to impress his friends and relatives to-day and has a taste for envious congratulations, for respect and approval, must be able to tell a different story of his sons. Only he who has a letter from the front with him, only he who can say at his inn: 'My son was at Tannenberg, at Ypres,' only he who can tell of an iron cross, a wound or the death of some descend-

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ant, can boast of his fatherhood to-day with uplifted head. So the boys are driven forth! If they were always ruffians, always ready to fight, brutal and hard-hearted—so much the better. If they were sensitive, averse from noise, dreamers, they have a hard time to-day. Who can help them? For who would be silent when others boast? Who would be the father of a slacker in this iron time? It sounds ugly, I know. Don't be offended, Mr. Dorndorf. But I can't keep still any longer. I seem to choke when the old men in their security, in their clean beds, are constantly admiring themselves and declaiming concerning their sacrifices, just as in peace they rattled the money which the education of their children had cost them. I don't believe that one ought to be silent any longer, or adopt an ostrich policy. One must demolish these lies. There is no other pathway to the hearts of men. Not until these phrases that every one repeats without testing them, not until they are destroyed can we sting into life the consciences that crouch in cowardly fashion behind a wall of lies!"

He dropped exhausted into a chair which Mathilde had moved nearer to him and with trembling hands patted his forehead.

"Phrases? . . . You call that phrases and lies?" Dorndorf growled with dull, repressed rage, and his hands, too, trembled. "Then I haven't anything further to say. . . . It's necessary for a man to have been a father to——"

"But uncle, Mr. Weiler didn't mean you,"

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Mathilde attempted to interpose. "We know that you're the kindest father——"

"Of course not," Weiler interrupted her eagerly. His kind eyes were fixed anxiously on the old man. His soft, feeling voice almost pleaded: "Surely you don't think I meant you? And surely you don't believe I was foolish enough to assert that there are no unselfish parents. Of course there are—many, many! But they're not important to-day. They suffer their children to be torn from them; they don't sacrifice them. It's the word sacrifice that I can't bear to hear any longer. And not to-day—of all days . . . On my way here, I couldn't help thinking constantly of an article I read in last night's paper. In this article it was made abundantly clear that there was no better investment than the war-loans. It was proven with the utmost exactness, by many examples, that the bonds represented the chance of making five per cent. on your money without a shadow of risk, and with the additional satisfaction of serving the fatherland by a patriotic action. When I started reading that last night at the restaurant, I thought it was a joke. And all night long and until morning came I wondered and wondered why men are willing to give up their sons without any guarantee that they would receive them back uninjured, without asking five per cent., solely for the sake of the honor of doing a patriotic action; and why, on the other hand, they make so many conditions before they give up their money. I couldn't understand

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why the state didn't conscript banknotes, since the money is as urgently needed as the sons of men. Surely there could be no doubt of the citizens' readiness for sacrifice? Were they not glad to give, without chaffering, their own flesh and blood? Well, before I had found any solution for my riddle I received, in the pattest way, this very morning, a letter from my uncle in Cologne. He has no children and owns a wholesale house that sells skins and furs and he has a great deal of money. You know how it is with rich relations. I hadn't heard from him in years. Now he wrote with the most astonishing cordiality. He had heard that I had been called to the colors and so he sent me a check for a thousand. He added quite magnanimously that I needn't worry a bit about this loan, because his entire stock had been taken over by the government at a splendid price; he was in a position to help me further, if necessary. There, you see, I was confronted for a second time by the same riddle. Why, I brooded and worried about it again, why doesn't the state simply say: 'I need boots for your sons to march in. Hence on the 23d inst. all leather-merchants, names A—E, and on the 24th, names E—N, and so on, are commanded to deliver their entire stocks at X barracks?' Was it possible—I shuddered at the question—that the state has so low an opinion of its citizens' devotion that it does not dare take over their money and their banknotes and their merchandise without guaranteeing a profit? And

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yet it took their sons without any compensation . . . I struggled against the explanation that forced itself upon me. Oh, I struggled desperately! I thought of the other lands at war—of France, England! It was the same thing—the same . . . Well, at noon, while we were rinsing our dinner pails, my comrade Fröbel was telling me about his father. The old gentleman has a farm somewhere in the foothills, and so he has excellent prospects now, because the state is paying a premium to all farmers if they'll plant just what the fatherland needs most urgently. I didn't quite understand the details even when he showed me the newspaper clipping that his father had sent him. But I did note the use of the word "stimulus." It seemed incomprehensible to me that the same people who are not only willing to give up their sons to slaughter, but actually drive them forth with enthusiasm—their sons who are the very contents of their lives, the consolation of their old age—that these people will renounce a portion of their profits only on condition that a sum paid as a "stimulus" reimburses them. If I'm wrong, show me just where I am. And if you can, I'll be glad to praise a spirit of sacrifice that I can't quite trust as long as it stops short at one's purse and not at one's parental love."

He had grown quite calm as he talked on; he was a little hoarse and there was the weariness of a deep disgust in his voice as though he were himself ashamed of the accusation which

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he uttered. When no one answered him, his eyes wandered in a frightened way among those earnest faces. At last, with a sigh, he seemed to sink back into himself.

No one found an answer. An oppressive silence filled the room. Gadsky shrugged his shoulders significantly and swung around again on the piano-stool toward the instrument. He had been observing Mathilde's face. The infinitely fine line of suffering had deepened about her mouth while Weiler was speaking. Defiantly he tried to expel what he had heard from his consciousness and let his fingers, gentle as breathing, run over the keys while he thought of the lovely Madonna-like face of his beloved.

Dorndorf didn't speak either. He stared at the carpet, firmly determined not to answer a syllable to the wretched slander. He had been wounded in what he considered his most sacred feelings, in his paternal dignity—the only kind he had conquered—and privately vowed to himself that he would not cross this threshold again until Gadsky and Weiler had departed for the front.

The clear, calm voice of Ensign von Krülow broke the long silence. They all listened; even Gadsky turned around surprised, for it was, so far as he could remember, the first time that Krülow had entered a discussion of his own impulse. Usually he merely followed the talk with shining, enthusiastic eyes, and grew embarrassed when some question forced him to join in the

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debate. It was astonishing that he should begin to speak without urging. It was clear that he was overflowing like a full vessel that could hold no drop more.

"I hope you won't take my words personally, Mr. Dorndorf," he began hesitatingly. His wavering glance sought Mathilde's face as though he hoped to find there the courage he needed to go on. "I don't know how it is in your circles. But in my family, during my leave, I had never to wait more than half an hour to hear the question: 'Do you know how many of us have already fallen?' Oh, they counted up the iron crosses, too. But that was a secondary consideration. It was rather painful for a man in uniform—this disputing among kinsmen who boasted to each other of the number of their dead. It was even more painful for my father who at that time had distinctly to feel humble with his three entirely unwounded sons. I actually felt apologetic to him . . ."

"Oh, you ought to be ashamed!" Mathilde said. She didn't want to believe . . .

But Krülow's gentle mouth wore a smile of bitter superiority in knowledge. The others caught it from him and Gadsby laughed as he drove a merry *capriccio* across the keys.

Dorndorf alone gazed at the floor in somber silence. He didn't care particularly about the babble of the two others. But to hear an active officer and the son of a general speak so—that pained him deeply. Mathilde caught the hateful

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glance that sprang at Krülow from under the old man's bushy eyebrows. It worried her. She feared that his patriotism was not above writing an anonymous accusation and she wanted to prevent Krülow's giving himself away any further. Swiftly she leaned across the table toward him, "Tell me, Mr. von Krülow, isn't there any possible protection from the malice of this horrible Mr. Stuff? I can't bear the thought that George is to remain quite defenseless against the whims of a coarse fellow like that!"

Krülow blushed as he always did when Mathilde's eyes rested on him. He shook his head regretfully. "Discipline, you see . . ." he said with gentle irony.

"But that's not discipline, that's slavery!" Mathilde returned indignantly. "A thoroughly wicked person like that might torment one to death!"

"He isn't such a devil as you think," Gadsby said over his shoulder without interrupting his playing. "If he were actually and thoroughly bad, one could console oneself with the reflection of having had extraordinarily bad luck. But he's positively good-natured. You can't even hate him for his stupidity."

"Gadsby is quite right," Krülow assured her in his gentle, careful way. "You musn't forget that Stuff has been a sergeant for twenty years. And he thinks nothing of it even now if occasionally his captain does him an injustice. He is accustomed to be silent no matter what is done

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to him by those above him; he has no feeling of personal honor in his dealings with his superiors. If you were to tell him that the human way of walking was unworthy of us, and that a new way of locomotion must be invented—he wouldn't be more astonished than by the proposition that he is to treat with less conscious superiority a recruit who has great knowledge and ability and need merely learn a few points of military technique, than a raw peasant lad of twenty who can scarcely read or write. For does he not, in turn, acknowledge without dispute the authority of a lieutenant of nineteen? The official superior amounts to more, has more power, knows more than his official inferior. To Sergeant Stuff that is as self-evident as that he breathes."

"And you seem to be of the opinion that he is wrong?" Dorndorf, unable to control himself, interrupted with bitter anger, "I'd like to see any army in the world in which every rookie is permitted to develop his own personality."

The mild and always slightly astonished eyes of the ensign showed a gleam as of blue steel. He looked hard at Dorndorf and said with that cool and unshakable self-control which is a fruit of all official military training: "On the contrary. Personally, Stuff's way of thinking has passed into my very blood. That is, of course, on account of the education which I—let me not call it enjoyed—but received. But I understand well that Gadsby is in the happy position of hav-

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ing been able to cultivate other modes of feeling." He pushed back his cuff and held out his right hand toward Mathilde. "Do you see those three white spots above the wrist-bone? Those scars date from my eleventh year, from the day of my entrance into the military training school. At the command of my monitor—a lad of fourteen—I had to hold out my arm while he dropped burning sealing-wax on it."

"But why, why?" Mathilde was outraged. "That's medieval. . . . !"

"You will find hazing scandals in the official military training schools of all countries. They grow out of the spirit that despises both wretchedness and compassion; above all they teach even the most stupid the meaning of utter subordination. And any one who has lived so since his early youth can scarcely even appreciate Gadsky's self-conscious indignation. You can understand that, dear lady."

Mathilde covered her face with her hands. "It's terrible," she moaned. "And do the parents know it?"

Weiler who had listened with a pale face suddenly drew himself up. "You musn't think those educational methods are confined to military schools. Everywhere in our modern world hardness and a repression of the gentler feelings are cultivated. Boys are ashamed to show feeling. They are ashamed to love poetry, to be moved by noble things. The age trains them to be spiritual ruffians and to call the gentle souls 'sissies.' The

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spirit of militarism has crept into all life and over the whole world."

Ensign von Krülow had listened with rapt attention. He said dreamily, "It's a strange feeling for me who grew up in the tradition of 'red-blooded' brutality to hear such heresies openly uttered. There was a legend in my childhood of the little son of a jailer who, when he went out into the world, was astonished that there were people who wore no chains. I remind myself of that boy."

He fell silent, and a mild and yearning expression gave his face a touch of strangeness. The others lowered their eyes too, as though their homesickness for their far childhood had been awakened. Even from Dorndorf's forehead the dark anger vanished for a few minutes. Mathilde arose and filled the cups. She pushed the cake tray nearer to Dorndorf and then carried a cup of tea to Gadsby at the piano.

He saw her standing by him; he felt the stillness that filled the room pass into his soul and looked up at her tenderly. The current that passed to him from her slender, flexible body made him tremble. Mathilde felt a slight and exquisite shiver too. She was leaning lightly on his shoulder. Then, with a quick determination, she bent over him: "Can't you come to-morrow evening?" He let the piano thunder and answered aloud: "If Sergeant Stuff has no objection."

"I'll wait with the car from half past six to

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seven, as usual," she breathed. She touched his ear delicately and then went back to the table.

Krülów had awakened again. He saw the gleam of blessedness in her eyes and flushed. Since the death of his mother, she was the first woman to whom he felt himself attracted in a pure and spiritual fashion. His bitter, intimidated heart reached out after her. He smiled as he compared her in his mind with the thin and frosty women among his kin.

Mathilde had a careworn look. "I'm in constant fear, Mr. von Krülów," she said softly, "that Gadsby will lose his temper and commit some terrible folly. Does he have to endure whatever the sergeant chooses to inflict? Is there no recourse . . . ?"

"Naturally, everything has its limits," Krülów stammered in embarrassment. "Even the omnipotence of a superior officer is conditioned on certain rules. If, for instance, a misuse of his authority could be clearly proven . . . But even in that case . . . The worst that could happen to Stuff would be several days' confinement to his rooms. He'd have wine and a game of cards and take no great harm. Gadsby, on the contrary, would sooner or later, I'm afraid . . ."

Bending far over Dorndorf had listened with curiosity. Now he beamed and completed the sentence triumphantly: "—make the acquaintance of a court martial."

"Even if it didn't come to that . . ." Krülów wanted to continue, but he interrupted himself

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as Weiler, who had been walking up and down excitedly, suddenly remained standing and showed the impulse to speak.

"And that's the sum of their wisdom—a court martial!" He spoke with extreme bitterness. "Our captain is perfectly happy when he can threaten us with that particular bogey. Have you ever thoroughly reflected,"—he turned to Dorndorf—"what that really means—a court martial? Don't you feel at all that the whole enormous one-sidedness, the blind violence of this great age of yours stares at us from that word? Isn't it the vilest injustice to judge men, to imprison them, even to shoot them, simply because they don't happen to possess one small group of characteristics and faculties? I'd like to see how it would fare with Stuff or even with our captain if, in times of peace, an all-absorbing organization—such as every conscript army is—demanded of all able-bodied men certain definite mental qualifications—the ability, say, of mastering the differential calculus! Why should professional soldiers alone have the privilege now of making one aptitude do for the whole of life, when all other men are threatened with a court martial if they are not skillful at learning a ruffian's trade? Could there be anything more senseless than this attempt to reduce all men to a common denominator? It is precisely as though we were to demand of sheep and oxen and all the domestic animals that they are to grow claws for the duration of the war and

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hurl themselves at the enemy like tigers! Are there not also numberless domestic human beings, who are useful and industrious but who have no claws? Take our poor comrade Fröbel, for instance. He's an admirable common-school teacher, just because he is gentle and patient. And now, suddenly, he is to . . ."

"That would be simple!" Dorndorf roared. "What you want is a paradise for slackers. Every one would say he was the domestic kind. That system would soon finish us. Our enemies could ruin and crush us."

Weiler suddenly grew very calm. "Ruin us, you say. Then let me ask of you one favor: Imagine this war to have taken place at some other period in history—say toward the end of the eighteenth century. And now blot out from human civilization all the inventions, discoveries, creative works in music and literature, the gains of the medical, philosophical and other sciences, in short, all the intellectual products of the men who, at that point of time, were between the ages of twenty and forty! That will give you some notion what a catastrophe like this means in regard to the future of mankind. You will probably reply that it is not the most gifted who will necessarily be killed. To be sure, the grenades will not select the finest brains to smash. But neither will they spare them. And I'm not inclined to believe that the most famous thinkers, artists and discoverers will make the best bayonet fighters."

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Dorndorf shook his head irritably. "In a word, you'd be in favor of having some people go out there to get their heads smashed for the others who can, in the meantime, sit in arm chairs at home and follow out their beautiful thoughts."

"And how is it now, if you please?" Weiler was thoroughly aroused. "Wouldn't Gadsby be permitted to stay at home too if his fingers had been trained to drill gun bores instead of to play the piano? Aren't thousands of men—engineers, chemists, miners—carefully guarded from all danger because they can accomplish more for the war where they are? That is precisely the fearful short-sightedness, that everything is expected which immediately serves the war, and that it is forgotten that in the total power of a people the achievements of all its members are contained. Or do you believe that the power of a nation can be heightened by increasing the number of guns at the expense of the intellectual values? A narrow-chested weakling who brews some new explosive is more valuable to-day than regiments of giants. Victories are won in the chart-room, in the laboratory, in the munition works. Nine-tenths of the actual fighters die without ever having seen the enemy who kills them. But people still fly flags and boast mightily, as though success were still the result of greater valor and not of an impersonal organization."

"Never mind that," Dorndorf replied sul-

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lenly. "A brave man can still find plenty of opportunity. And if we construct pieces of artillery that no one can imitate, it speaks for our greater capability. We shall win because we are superior to the enemy in every respect."

"Do you think so?" Weiler interrupted him. "Do you think it is our minds against the minds of the enemy? Not at all! Intellectual achievements are international. We use enemy inventions against him; he uses ours against us."

"Nonsense," Dorndorf protested in indignation. "We may use his inventions. Very well. We use them better. It shows that we are more skillful, industrious and brave."

"Suppose we leave the whole question of valor out," Weiler jeered. "Since in this war it is the aim of every general on both sides to get the enemy under fire at the greatest possible distance, so that he can't shoot back, to surround him and attack him, if possible, in the rear, and since all these means to victory depend on the invention of guns and the ability of generals, there is confoundedly little room left for voluntary personal valor. Power and courage scarcely belong to war any longer. The strongest man is no better than a paralytic if he would compete with one of the gigantic cranes in the Hamburg harbor; a baby, by pressing a button, can lift a thousand times as much. That was all very fine and true so long as the stronger arm, the longer spear, the harder head decided a combat. To-day the same qualities are successful in war which

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decide competition in what we call peace. Whoever has invented the greater number of buttons to press can also manufacture the greater number of grenades. Really one could leave the whole skull-cracking process out altogether. The larger industry would still gain the upper hand; the more cunning commercial method prevail over the simpler one. It is only because people cling to tradition and because it is to the professional advantage of some to cling to it, that we still make the number of dead men the criterion of power. Naked competition, in all its unadorned sobriety, without any bloodshed, would probably seem too cruel to these people."

Gadsky laughed aloud. Mathilde had arisen and threatened Weiler playfully. She went toward the door. "Here it's six o'clock. I must get ready to go to the theater and the whole afternoon has passed without our having been happy or comfortable. But watch out! Next time I'll have a Red Cross bank on the table and whoever argues will be fined."

Full of remorse Weiler took her hand and touched it with his lips.

Dorndorf followed his niece with his eyes and waited until the door was shut behind her. Then he turned to Weiler with a challenging air.

"I'm not up to your profound explanations," he began with sarcastic humility. "May I, however, offer a very simple comparison, even if it's not so witty as your proposal to make tigers of sheep and oxen? So far as I was able to follow

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your train of thought you were trying, by means of this comparison, to prove that it isn't right to tear peace-loving people from their civil pursuits and send them to war. But now I want you to tell me whether a man who is overtaken by an inundation and is fighting with the water must not try, above all things, to get firm ground under his feet again? I don't believe that he'll give a damn just then about his other talents, but gather all his possible energy into his arms and legs. Even Caruso, in that situation, would hardly sing arias and—drown. He'll forget all about his precious larynx and hold himself above water as long as he can. Or do you think he . . . ”

Impatiently Weiler interrupted him. “I think exactly as you do. We agree perfectly. You said yourself that the man, in spite of his extremity, will use only his arms and legs. He won't even attempt to swim with his larynx. If his arm and legs aren't strong enough, he has to drown. And that's all I ask. But the state pursues the contrary policy. It says: This is no time to sing or think or poetize or paint or do a hundred other things. Therefore the larynx—as well as all the other organs and functions of peace—must now be transformed into arms and legs. And if—to grant your comparison—the larynx doesn't succeed in helping the man to swim, the court martial must teach it to do so.”

“That's quibbling, mere quibbling! Of course

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you can take anything and twist and turn it till. . . ." Dorndorf was gasping.

Mathilde reëntered now, dressed for the street. She stepped between the two men. "Are you fighting again?" She pushed her uncle gently aside and turned to Weiler: "You bad man!"

Dorndorf gasped for air. He stood on tiptoe and shouted across Mathilde's shoulder: "No one can accuse me of undervaluing literature and art. And it's easy enough to prove that a man can't swim with his larynx." Then he turned to Gadsky and added venomously: "A man has gone pretty far when he finds such cheap jokes entertaining."

Mathilde laid her hand on the old man's shoulder. "Uncle, we shall have to go now." But he escaped her and exclaimed with unction: "If we had the enemy in the fatherland destroying and trampling down everything and using pianos as fuel, Mr. Gadsky wouldn't have much chance of practicing his art! And I believe there would be damned few people in that case who would take pleasure in his playing. When the existence of a nation is at stake, even the finest music is a useless toy. One must, after all, distinguish between the things that count more and those that count less. . . ."

"Existence?" Weiler interrupted him again. "You can't very easily blow away a nation of seventy million souls . . ."

Gadsky had closed the piano. He stood beside

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Krūlow and listened with amusement to the debate. Now he suddenly grew grave, pushed Weiler aside and turned calmly but incisively toward Dorndorf. "Listen, my dear man! I wish you would leave my art out of the argument. You say it is, after all, a mere game! I am not sure but what the emptier game isn't all this shooting, this waste of billions that lays waste whole countries and brings whole nations to the point of beggary! It, in fact, is a game—the game of a couple of thousand of undeveloped diplomatic brains all over Europe who would rather smash the world to bits than reëducate their own way of thinking. With my art I can turn gross and uncouth oafs to gentleness and love. With my art I can change hate into kindness and transform the clenched fist into the outstretched hand. And this holy earnestness that impresses you so—what does it do? It changes strong men into stinking carrion; it turns kind and good men into cruel beasts—everywhere and always. Don't meddle with my art! You'll be yearning for it in dust and ashes some day, if this noble earnestness of yours prevails for another year or two. Wait!—Shan't we go?"

He turned his back on Dorndorf. But his face brightened again as his eyes met Mathilde's. She healed his soul with the completeness of her silent assent. She slipped past the others and with a characteristic nod of her head which he loved, she said: "I must go, even if you gentle-

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men are not quite through. We begin at seven and it's almost half past six."

Ensign von Krülow had already buckled on his sword and slipped into his overcoat. He was waiting in the anteroom. His quiet, thoughtful face was suffused with a radiance of content. He went with Mathilde and Gadsby and said on the stairs, drawing his breath deeply: "It does me good to hear Dorndorf obliterated! All that I've had to choke down for fifteen long years . . ." He fell silent, for Dorndorf and Weiler appeared on the landing, and they went downstairs without further speech. Outside Mathilde surreptitiously drew two tickets from her bag and turned to Krülow: "Couldn't the leave possibly be extended until eleven? If you were to say a word to his majesty, the sergeant?"

"Nonsense!" Gadsby thundered. "It's all arranged for the other two gentlemen to go. Don't be childish, my dear."

"Unfortunately your overestimate my influence," Krülow stammered.

"Do have a good time!" Gadsby said energetically and took Mathilde's hand.

She tried to hold him back. "I'm in such good form to-day," she begged. "The second act is at half past nine. . . ."

But Gadsby had already torn himself away, waved his good-night greeting and, drawing Weiler with him, hastened away. Mathilde followed him with her eyes until he had disappeared around the nearest corner. "Perhaps he's

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glad to have the excuse," she said with a mild and tired little smile to Krülow, who looked at her as guiltily as though it were his fault.

Weiler permitted himself to be drawn along through the streets. His head was bowed and he answered Gadsby's remarks distractedly. It was always so with him. When his excitement disappeared, remorse overcame him. When, in the course of a debate, a profound conviction spoke from him, he could be pitiless and sharp. So soon as he was no longer face to face with his opponent, he grew gentle and pangs of conscience tormented him. "I shouldn't have spoken so frankly on the point of parental vanity," he said in a depressed way after a while, and looked anxiously up at Gadsby. "But Dorndorf," he continued, "stings me with his empty repetition of stereotyped commonplaces so that I lose all control over myself." But with a new flame of passionate conviction he added: "But it's true! I swear to you it's true! You heard Mr. von Krülow confirm all I said. Only I shouldn't have told the old gentleman all that to his face . . ."

Gadsby wasn't at all in the mood to be mild or forgiving. The farewell had stirred up anew his hatred of Stuff, and also the feeling that there were six days of torment ahead of him gnawed at him again. It was stupid, it was mad of him, to creep back every Sunday into that atmosphere of culture and of exquisiteness like a criminal who is drawn back to the scene of his crime until he is caught. The venom had gathered in his

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heart and he let his wretchedness rattle down on Weiler. "Don't talk such rot! Not say things to him face to face? You intend to hold in what you think on this fellow's account? You said too little. Watch him how he beams and boasts! Oh, if only he were young enough to go to the front! Easily said! You hear it from them all! They're all aching to go! But one should tell them the straight truth for once—these shaky professors and councilors and editors! Like bathing children they patter about in our blood! Isn't it a comfortable situation—to sit down softly cushioned and then to assign to the young the task of dying as though it were a lesson in Cicero? Have you ever watched one of these palsied old fellows when he sees young, strong men march past him out to battle? He barely refrains from calling out to us: 'Eh! We're sixty and our arteries are hardening and the gout is in our bones and we'll survive you for all that! Eh! Eh!' They grin at us as full of malice as monkeys in a cage, and screech their patriotic phrases and wave their arms like an old farmer driving his poultry across the farmyard. Why shouldn't you speak out? You said far too little, not too much!"

Weiler did not answer. Gadsky's rage intimidated him. This scene was repeated every Sunday on their way back. For it was not until the barracks stretched out its fangs toward him and the whole bitterness of his situation came over him, that Gadsky would return to the debates at

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Miss von Moellnitz' which he had treated as a mere spectator before. And Weiler, the springs of whose enthusiasm and wrath were run down, had to suffer his friend's belated explosions.

"You are a queer fellow," Gadsby said after a brief pause. "If ever in the heat of debate a frank word escapes you, you let it eat into your soul later. You imagine, I suppose, that Dorn-dorf is just as quiveringly sensitive as you are? You can't imagine that there are people whose inner lives are far more robust. You strike me like a sort of inverted Stuff. That vulgar fellow believes it's quite as easy for any man to cringe as it is for him. And you, on the contrary, attribute your own fineness of feeling to every member of the species. That accounts for your morbid love of the mob. You ought to know these people from actual acquaintance as I do. You'd soon lose all desire to defend them."

"They need no defense," Weiler said stubbornly. "If I had grown up under such unfavorable conditions as those poor people, if I had seen nothing about me but hardness and need and discrimination, and had had no sight of any of the beautiful things in life except across a tall iron fence, I wouldn't be different by a hair's breadth."

Gadsby laughed a brief, jeering laugh but made no answer. He considered that Weiler made a fool of himself over the proletariat. He himself, from his childhood on, had nourished a bitter dislike of the workers. In the little indus-

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trial village where he had grown up he had been better clad than the other children. And so he, the son of the government official, had been attacked and beaten and pushed into mud puddles in his Sunday best. And the flattering reception which good society had given him immediately after his first success had but served to deepen that early dislike. This was the one question in regard to which he and Weiler could find no common ground. He shrugged his shoulders with a touch of contempt and hurried on until, short of breath, he stopped in the middle of the street. "Where are we rushing to anyhow?" he asked moodily.

"I thought we were going to dine somewhere," Weiler stammered in his astonishment. Gadsby looked about and pointed to a large, cheap restaurant that boldly threw its cone of light across the street. "That's where we belong," he said. "That's the proper place for common soldiers—this hash-mill!" He laughed at the look of fright in Weiler's eyes. For Weiler had an unconquerable aversion from crowds and their noise. He drew him along and patted his shoulder. "You must come in there. It will give you a chance to rejoice in your fellowmen. You'll see—they'll make much of us. Aren't we going to permit ourselves to be massacred in order that they may swill their beer in peace?"

The tables were all taken. About the great chandeliers floated clouds of cigar smoke and of steam. They heard a sound of speech like the

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whirring and grinding of a huge machine. Weiler turned back in the middle and ran toward the door. He was glad there was no vacant table. But Gadsby took him by the arm and led him to a big table surrounded by noisy philistines who made room for them. Gadsby declared with exaggerated courtesy that he and his friend would be glad to avail themselves of the friendly invitation and gave Weiler a sarcastic look as two boisterous giants drew the latter down on the seat beside them. It gave him a sinister pleasure to observe the desperate defenselessness of his friend. He wanted to use this opportunity to heal him thoroughly of his predilection for the mob. He invented stories in order to fasten the attention of these men ruthlessly upon Weiler.

"I haven't myself been at the front yet," he said modestly, "but my friend here, although he looks so pale and fragile, has about nine Englishmen to his credit. He won't have to wait much longer for his iron cross."

"That's right," roared the fat man next to Weiler and held out a great paw to him. "Don't spare them fellows, whatever you do! A pack o' thieves!"

Gadsby turned to the man with an apparently deep sympathy and respect.

"I suppose you know the English thoroughly? May I ask whether you've ever lived among them?"

The fat man opened his mouth in amazement.

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"Why?" he asked suspiciously. But he found his self-confidence again at once. "I? Lived among 'em?" He shook his fist protestingly. "Aw, what do you take me for? I never wanted to have nothin' to do with them scoundrels."

"I understand fully," Gadsby said very gravely. "You got your fill of them, so to speak, at a distance."

Weiler suffered intensely. With hot cheeks he bent over his plate and thought he would choke with every bite he had to force down. The cruelty with which Gadsby carried off his practical joke on these people wounded him more deeply than the hurt done to himself. How could he so misuse the credulity of these good-natured donkeys?

A man with spectacles who looked like a court assistant turned to Weiler and asked: "When do you return to the front?" He forced a cigar on him. Weiler was going to blurt out the truth, but Gadsby interposed: "In three days and this time to Belgium." He threw off the information triumphantly.

At once the red, heated heads drew closer together and a flood of questions and bits of advice poured down over the two. Each of the men had particularly authentic information concerning the atrocities of the Belgian *franc-tireurs* which he believed with all the honest force of his ignorance and consequent limitation of outlook. The fat man begged Weiler to trust no Belgian out of his sight—no, not even the women. . . .

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Weiler could endure it no longer. He threw a coin on the table, slipped into his overcoat and withdrew from further advice and felicitation through flight. Gadsby did his best to make up for his friend's strange abruptness. He let himself be shaken by the hand endlessly, permitted his pockets to be filled with cheap cigars and laughed at their fierce encouragement and warlikeness.

On the street he let all his disgust creep into his face. "Now," he turned to Weiler, "now, my dear fellow, you have had a little taste of the class that is so close to your heart. Won't you now . . ."

But Weiler wouldn't let him finish. He was like a child. There was a moisture in his eyes. But his indignation was virile. "You speak as though you were a prince's child who had grown up away from the world. In the first place, what have these dreary philistines to do with the workers of the world? And it is them whom I defend! But let that go! I grant you that the people are foolish and stubbornly ignorant. And yet you ought to be ashamed! What do these poor devils say? Exactly what the leader-writers in the newspapers teach them to say. Every sentence they uttered fairly reeked of printer's ink. Do you suppose English philistines in a London inn have a finer insight into the German character? If you want to vent your rage on any one, vent it on the newspaper scoundrels in all countries who befog their particular

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mob with flattery until national vanity and belligerency is everywhere—everywhere—like a ravening beast! Those poor devils in there would also and far rather, I assure you, have been great artists traveling through the world and forming their independent opinion of men and things. Your lofty superiority is really a very inexpensive feeling—for you!”

He stopped rather abruptly and turned in the direction of the barracks. Gadsby stared at him in astonishment. “You’re incorrigible,” he said, but his voice had lost its assurance. “You say—poor devils! Ah, these poor devils will be sitting at that same table and brag and feel themselves superior to others at the expense of victories which they have helped to celebrate when you and I will be rotting in some foreign soil.”

Weiler made no answer. He walked as quickly as he could through narrow side-streets to reach the great square. He found it hard to react, to liberate himself from the memory of the talk in the inn. He thought of the people behind the front in all the world and their talk—their pompous, ruthless talk of hate and punishment and self-glorification. It seemed to him to desecrate the unspeakable suffering that filled all lands. Didn’t these stay-at-homes know that on every field on every day and every night boys who were on the threshold of life, which should have been full and sweet to them, were laying down their heads upon the naked earth to die? Did they not know that fathers of families, too, were

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bleeding from fatal wounds and agonizing with their last breath over those they were leaving to the harshness of the riven world? How could they forget that whole lands were dying and sit at home and talk of empty words concerning "justice" and "vengeance" and, of all things, "glory!"

He had never been an enthusiast for the war. In psychical self-defense he had, with enormous difficulty, made out some sort of a case. He had tried to imagine himself standing before his books on their shelves and hostile forces trying to tear and defile them . . . But that small refuge had been taken from him too. He saw only those men at the table and other groups of men in the enemy countries precisely like them—all ablaze with the lust for violence and booty, land and indemnities, victory and wealth! And it seemed to him that everywhere those conversations were like the plots hatched in the dens of criminals. And everything within him rebelled against being sacrificed in a struggle in which friend and foe seemed to him alike driven by an urge he could not share . . .

He actually longed for his straw-mattress, for the dark room where he could flee to the walled inner city of his thoughts and dreams. He quivered when Gadsby suddenly touched his sleeve. "Surely you don't want to go back yet? It's only eight o'clock and we have a clear hour and a half. Servant-girls and rookies never come

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back before their time is up. Let's go to see moving pictures. It will distract our thoughts."

Weiler plead his weariness and his distaste for moving pictures. Gadsby urged him on. He was sorry over the scene in the inn and he feared to have Weiler end the day in so desperate a mood. For in the barracks, as he knew to his cost, an inner bitterness corroded the soul more and more. On one's cot one lay as isolated as in a prison-cell, buried with one's heaviness of soul, cut off from all human sympathy. Finally Weiler, moved by the remorse in Gadsby's eyes, permitted himself to be led to the entrance of the theater which was flanked by glaring posters, roofed by the arc-lamps, and seemed to him like a huge gullet sucking in the people on the streets.

At first they were both glad to be in the darkness. After the icy wind the warmth of the crowded auditorium was grateful to their limbs. But presently the faint odor of the well-fed Sunday crowd seemed to oppress their foreheads. Gadsby studied Weiler's thin, rapt face with compassion. In the pale light reflected back from the brilliant screen it looked like a death mask. Where had he lived the thirty years of his life that a contact with the rough average of mankind crushed and astonished him so? Did he really think the nation was a compact mass of poets and philosophers? If so, then like a precious flower, hidden in his books, guarded from the coarse world, he should be kept and

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spared the horrors of reality. Hurling into the combat with a gun and a bayonet, he was bound to go under like a stone thrown into water. No force on earth could turn these fragile, kind hands into the paws of a beast of prey.

Weiler felt the sympathy that came to him from his friend and regretted his recent violence. So they sought each other's minds through speech again in their indignation over the worthlessness of the spectacle. Gadsky cursed the shameless way in which melodies by Chopin and Mozart were ruined and mutilated on poor instruments and in false tempi; Weiler was tormented by the thick sentimentality and inner falseness of the story which the pictures told. But the public took it in devoutly. At the end came pictorial news of the war and the crashing of a projectile from a forty-two centimeter gun was welcomed with an uproar of applause. The two friends hurried out of the theater.

"There," cried Gadsky, "there you have seen our hangmen face to face. These people who are so moved when the kidnapped child says its evening prayer, are jubilant at the sight of a projectile that can tear a dozen human creatures into rags. And they are capable of the two emotional responses within the same fifteen minutes. And do you know why? On account of the tribal vanity that corrupts the whole world—the swinish meaning that has been given in all countries to the word patriotism! If it's *their* projectile,

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an invention of some one within *their* tribe, if it's *their* achievement—let it kill and rend! Isn't that so?"

"I don't have to ask the question," Weiler replied firmly. "I know it. But I also know that these people and their equals in all the world are capable of being kind and just and modest if school and pulpit, the newspaper and the moving picture had always taught love instead of vanity, brotherhood instead of patriotism."

With a heavy sigh and a gesture of renunciation Gadsby proceeded toward the tramway. But on the way he remained standing once more for a minute and said with a calm and weary bitterness of spirit: "My dear fellow, I envy you your faith. And I don't want to argue any more. But I'd like to explain to you just why I can't follow you. I don't care to ask how these people would have been if they had received another kind of psychical nourishment from without. I see what they are to-day. And I know with a thorough knowledge how I have had to lash and goad my imperfect will and drive myself to the piano. Achievement demands its price. And I know too how you, Arthur Weiler, through long years of profound inner agony and self-analysis and intimate suffering, rose from the man to the poet that you are. And to-day I see the two of us sacrificed in order that the vile mob may wallow in its self-adoration. These poor herd-animals are neither rich nor wise, nor beautiful nor learned. Well, they haven't the slightest desire

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to work at their own selves and their own souls to amount to anything. But they want, nevertheless, to enjoy all the triumph of self-hood which they have not earned. And that is why they have been led by statesmen and generals everywhere to plunge the world over the abyss. They take refuge in that collective vanity which is called patriotism—the universal slogan: ‘My country can lick creation!’ And it is nothing but a refuge from their personal worthlessness and sloth. They set up their fetish and then suddenly they no longer know weariness or doubt. They will march thrice around the earth and set it on fire rather than descend into their own souls and cleanse and fortify them.”

He walked on. His cigarette was trembling in his fingers and he breathed quickly as if he had been running. When they had reached the tram-car station he suddenly stretched out his hand toward Weiler and said cordially: “Once in a while I need to relieve myself this way. I won’t bother you for a long time now.”

Weiler took the proffered hand and for a moment peace and quietness fell upon the souls of both. Then they jumped on the car and each retired to a corner of the rear platform.

In the car sat a robust gentleman wearing a broad-brimmed slouch hat that seemed a little out of keeping with his elegant fur-coat. Again and again he peered at Gadsky over the edge of his paper. At last he came over, looked hard and then overwhelmed Gadsky with enforced friend-

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liness. "Is it really you, Mr. Gadsby? You're in the army, too. Well, isn't that glorious! How do you do?"

It was the conductor of the municipal orchestra, a gossip and a mediocre musician whom Gadsby, in better days, would hardly have held worthy of a clasp of his hand. But now he arose before him like the symbol of a lost world and brought with him the fragrance of rehearsals and of packed concert-halls and the recollection of a certain George Gadsby whose magic hands could change the turbulence of an audience into a breathless silence.

The conductor was in his element. He was happy to have found some one who had heard no musical gossip for months. He pretended complete astonishment at the other's ignorance. "Haven't you really heard that? You seem to have been at the other end of the earth!"

Gadsby suffered the flood of speech to be poured over him. Only the little word "mister" seemed to him like a blow each time that it was uttered. For he was bitterly ashamed of the feeling of warmth and inner decency which it gave him. "Don't say Mr. Gadsby to me,"—he spoke with irritation and arrogant bitterness—"I am tempted to look around for the person whom you mean. I am Private Gadsby now. I've quite ceased being an honorable fellowman who deserves the ordinary amenities. A private in the infantry is not a gentleman but a sort of school-boy. Just say 'Gadsby' to me with a touch of

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condescension. Otherwise I'll seem to myself to be sailing under false colors."

The conductor gave an embarrassed smile. His small, roguish eyes studied the features of the man before him. He was puzzled. Was it a jest? Or did the man want to be consoled? After some hesitation he thought it best to treat the matter jocularly. He laughed thunderously and immediately embarked on another bit of scandal.

"Attention!" Weiler whispered from behind and pulled Gadsby by the coat. As the latter turned around he saw Sergeant Stuff with his fearfully over-dressed spouse sit down in the car. Gadsby jerked back his shoulders, pulled up his head and rattled his heels together. The cold sweat had gathered on his forehead when the salute was completed and he was forced to turn toward the conductor again. Was it possible, he asked himself, to observe without a secret smile this sudden petrefaction and then the matter-of-fact return to a normal human condition on the part of him who had been Gadsby, the pianist? In his embarrassment he looked past the conductor, then bent down and whispered to him: "Do you see there—that is a 'gentleman,' a member of the master class and for the time our unlimited ruler—Sergeant Stuff."

The other nodded with the utmost lack of interest. Then he chattered on, telling the story he had begun at the point where he had been interrupted. "Well, you can imagine the rage

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of our director. He sent for the man at once . . .”

Hadn't he really understood? Did he think the sergeant had merely passed the car on the street? “He's right *in* the car? There—next to that fat woman in the scarlet hat!”

Again there was merely that careless nod. Merely a matter of politeness. The conductor actually thought the interruption a bit rude. “Our tenor isn't backward either. So he said to his Excellency right straight out to his face . . .”

Gadsky didn't hear the other's words. His blood throbbed in his temples. He seemed to fall into some unplumbed moral abyss. All he could see was the conductor's infinitely careless little nod of assent. And he couldn't calm himself. It was perfectly natural, of course, that the conductor shouldn't take the slightest interest in a mere sergeant. Why should he care even to glance if but for a moment at the features of a thoroughly indifferent person? He himself would not have turned his head a few months ago.

But his reason failed him to-day . . . The sight of the fat, careless man took his breath away. His fingers grasped the brass bar beside him; he gnashed his teeth. He struggled against the temptation to cry out concerning the injustice that he endured. And all this flared up in him anew when he and Weiler left the car and turned into the narrow street that led to the barracks.

“The sergeant is behind us,” Weiler whispered

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to him. "Hold yourself up or he'll order extra drill to-morrow. He's capable of it."

Gadsky moaned. He almost hated his friend for walking in correct military fashion. He wanted to act unconscious, not to do the brute that much honor . . . Then he remembered his engagement with Mathilde for the following evening and immediately observed his own heels tap the pavement more resonantly and his arms swing more rhythmically. He, a grown man, was acting like a mechanical doll because those accursed looks were at his back, because he knew that stupid male scold was behind him . . .

And the conductor?

He was no older, no weaker, no less vigorous than himself. He hadn't honored the sergeant by a glance. He walked the way he pleased and went home to his own bed; he was his own master, and made his own plans for the coming day.

The tyrant who ruled his fate, the disgustful polypus whose fangs were in his flesh day and night was as nothing to that other man, less than any of the other little events that interrupt a conversation in public. The conductor hadn't even turned his head to look—so infinitely secure was he under the protection of his release from military service.

It was wrong! It was unspeakably monstrous!

Breathlessly he ran up the stairs. When he reached his cot he sat down on it like a man

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turned to stone, taking off neither his coat nor his cap.

Weiler undressed quietly. He was about to lie down, but the sight of his friend made him restless. "Do undress, Gadsby. Stuff is going to make his rounds."

But Gadsby didn't move. What was the matter with him? It seemed to Weiler as though a quiver shook his friend's back. Slowly he went nearer and peered at him and saw the distorted face on which there were tears of rage and humiliation.

"For heaven's sake, what is wrong with you?"

Gadsby stared at him with unseeing eyes. Then he shook his head sadly and muttered, with a suppressed sob in his voice, as reverently as though he was uttering an incomprehensible secret:

"He didn't even turn around. . . ."

II

MUTINEERS

II

MUTINEERS

THE empty wagon stood on the great square with its shaft projecting perpendicularly upward. It was surrounded by soldiers and looked like the skeleton of an animal with great black ribs. The icy wind of March swept through the village, whirled the thick clouds of dust across the frozen street and gnawed at a man's fingers even if they were deep in his pockets. And yet the groups of men did not scatter but seemed to be held together by a secret expectation.

George Gadsby helped the stretcher-bearer, from whose neck the sweat was pouring, arrange his papers and quietly watched his comrades from behind a chart. Their slow hesitation, the stubborn hostility with which they watched each other as though each expected of the other man that liberating cry which he himself choked down—this embarrassed lingering on the draughty square, although the chimneys all around were smoking and the lamp-light shimmered through the dim windows—ah, all this moved him more deeply than the moaning of the wounded had done a little while ago.

He knew why these poor devils didn't want to

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return to their warm billets. Seventy-three mutilated, whining human creatures had been unloaded before their eyes from the wagon on which the French peasants used to carry their dung to the fields. And in the flickering eyes of the men gleamed all the horror of it and the dread question: "Is it really irrevocable? Shall I have to drag my poor body thither where it is trodden under or torn into quivering fragments?"

For a moment Gadsby felt dizzy, as though he were wrapped in a colored cloud which lifted him up so that he no longer felt the earth beneath his feet. Out of a distant roar his own voice seemed to emerge and to echo sharply across the windy square: "Comrades!" He thought he had heard himself calling out and was so frightened that he sunk his teeth into his nether lip and surveyed the circle of faces about him suspiciously. He peered successively into every face.

No, thank God, it had been a delusion. And what end would it have served in reality? Could his words have aroused the souls of men whom a dray full of human torment did not sting into revolt? He remembered the old tale of King Midas's servant who had wanted to bury his voice in the earth. Even that seemed wiser than to hope for a response from the men about him. He knew them! Not more than two would risk so much as a nod of agreement. He knew of each man what attitude he would assume. He

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could pick out the better ones who would at least turn aside in compassion and feel humiliated by his useless sacrifice of himself. And then he looked at the many who would themselves help to lay hands upon the mutineer—out of stupidity or ambition, revengefulness, envy, patriotism! For tenaciously as they clung to life, great as was the dread in their eyes, they would never endure a liberator from among themselves. For this alone made their fate tolerable, that they were all equal in wretchedness and suffering. Woe to him who would lift himself above them! They would fall upon him as upon the revealer of their shame and would trample him into expiation . . .

He lowered his eyes. He could no longer endure their glaring masks. They were like grotesque relief figures on the base of a great general's monument. They were an hundred thousand arms and legs animated by a single brain. Whatever else of humanity still adhered to them was mere waste, the result of an imperfect military training.

Gadsky felt again the profound disgust he had experienced when, a few days before, this same herd of men had acclaimed the Field Marshal who had driven in an auto between their dirty, sweat-bathed ranks. On that day he had seen these extinguished eyes gleam, he had seen their faces glow as though all that had left their bodies empty shells—without will or hope—lived on in that idol of theirs.

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He could not help in a sense hating this horde. They were ready to be slaughtered and they were willing to applaud their hangman if only his great, scientific sickle caused even greater destruction among the enemy. The enemy! But there was no hope in him. He, too, had sold himself to the professional murderers who lead in war; he too dreaded and slew. Gadsby hated them all—all! He had been ready to speak to these men of his own people, to sacrifice himself. Why should he—for these cold, hard, blunted creatures!

He passed his hand over his forehead. The memory of the scene had been as vivid as its reality. It had happened to him often recently that the past and the present had become inextricably blended in their images in his mind. His brooding had become so intense and the dull monotony of the past few months had so deadened his receptivity to reality that his thoughts threw their shadows upon all happenings. The days had become featureless. The eternally equal burden had stamped them into an indistinguishable mass of gray, and only the dream—embraced an hundred times—the dream of the war's end and of liberation projected like a radiant reality into the insupportable present.

One glance seemed to be tugging at him, to be unwilling to let him go, and drew him back into that circle of men. Into his awakened mind stared the deadly pale, perturbed face of the non-commissioned officer Fröbel. The man's eyes

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were wide open with terror, a deep line of intense sorrow ran from his mouth. But Gadsky felt the glance of those eyes like a dull challenge. He clenched his fists and turned away at once. The wretched coward must learn to bear his agony alone. Each man had enough here if he but carried his own burden.

"If you let the sheets fly away, I'll have to decline your assistance," the stretcher-bearer said and took up his bag of documents with trembling fingers. He walked off and, still handling the sheets nervously, disappeared in the hut of the hospital station. His going seemed to release the men from their rigidity. They cleared their throats and spat and lit their pipes again. Then one group broke up and quickly, as though relieved of a nightmare, the others followed.

Gadsky saw them hastening in all directions toward the doors of the houses. Their heads were hanging, their backs were bent. And at once all his old compassion for them came to life again. His wrath fell silent within him at the sight of all these lowly shoulders. By God, they were being sorely punished for their obedience. Even the dullest among them carried with him into the warm room of his billet frightful images: he saw himself return on a cart as a mass of bloody flesh and sat at table opposite his own corpse. Not one choked down his supper to-night without, as it were, saying farewell to his own pulse and heart.

With tall, upturned collar, alone on the great

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square, he stared shivering at the deserted wagon and at the broken shaft that projected ever higher into the darkness. It looked like a gallows. And the thought came to him again that behind all those gleaming windows poor, human sinners were taking what they feared might be their last meal on earth. And he seemed able to see their thoughts, secretly chaffering with their great misfortune, each involuntarily offering the other as a sacrifice to their monstrous doom. And suddenly it became very clear to him that his own indignation over the drawn face of Fröbel had been nothing but the reaction of his own cowardice, a protest of his own fear for himself. That was the inner reason why any show of fear was tabooed among soldiers in war, because each was conscious that there lived in him the treacherous hope that he, he alone, would be protected as by a guardian angel, even if his whole battalion suffered death. And whoever, like Fröbel, did not conceal his fear beneath a mask of some sort, was shamelessly crying out this secret hope of his to the others: "I don't want to die! Go and die for me. . . ."

He felt sorry for Fröbel. He meant to go and look him up. Just then he felt a hand on his shoulder and when he swung around he saw the deep-blue eyes of Weiler looking at him with deep earnestness.

"Have you seen Fröbel?" Weiler asked with a strange vibration in his voice. "Poor fellow!

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Don't you think he might report sick? He looks terrible."

Gadsky didn't answer. He seemed a giant to himself beside this transparent, slender figure who wore his clumsy, muddy, army boots as though he were in disguise. Finally he said, forcing himself to express an unfelt indignation: "You know, I think there's almost a touch of affectation in your pity for Fröbel. What you can stand, surely that great lout with his non-com. stripes can stand too. No one here has more than one life to . . ."

Weiler didn't let him finish. His pale, kind face suddenly lost its mild radiance and grew weary with a great sadness. "No," he plead, "you musn't talk like the others. You know it isn't a question of muscles. Imagine that you had been teaching elementary branches to the children of the poor year in and year out, and that all your joy and the true content of your life had been summed up in Fröbel's little three-room flat, and that your highest hope had been to save enough for an extra handsome rug and a dictionary! Identify yourself with the poor devil for five minutes and you will not judge him so harshly. He always makes me think of a snail who has built its little house from the sap of its own life. And now cruel forces come and tear the little house from the living flesh out of which it has grown. Last week when we lay under fire in the new trench some one asked for the day of the month. Fröbel replied

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quick as lightning and added sadly: 'I know because to-day my little wife is paying the last installment on her sewing-machine. Now they can't rob her of that, at least.' And even while he was speaking his teeth were rattling and the cold sweat of terror poured from his forehead. I could have wept over the smashing of this poor happiness—this humble happiness on the installment plan. I wanted to cry out, too! To think that society forces men to become machine-like in this fashion, to reckon out their wretched lives to the payment of a final penny on a given date, and then steps in and shatters their addition when it has just amounted to a comfortable little three-room flat for a wife and a child. And you needn't pretend. You feel just as sorry for him as I do."

Gadsky turned away. He was unmanned by a great tenderness. He could have embraced Weiler in love and reverence. For the latter had won a great victory over the common enemy of friend and foe. He had offered an impregnable proof that all the blind force in the world cannot crush the spirit of an entire man. Here he was, fragile and worn, exhausted, tortured, dirty, about to set out on his march to death. And he had risen above his tormentors because he had risen above himself. With all their insistence upon uniformity, with all their hatred of any one who would not merge himself in the mass, they had not been able to change this poor, tormented slave of theirs one jot. He bore the rifle

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and the bayonet. But his soul was the soul of goodness, and he was victorious over the universal machine of war.

Weiler waited for an answer and thought that Gadsby had rejected his reasoning and his plea. "You do poor Fröbel wrong," he therefore added softly. "He has a harder time than you or I. Do you think we would be braver than he if our social environment had not taught us the stoicism of good form? People of our kind always, so to speak, carry a mirror before them, and each one suppresses his pain so as to hide the grimace which might tell of that pain to others."

"No," Gadsby said thoughtfully and took Weiler's arm. "We're a bit worse off just because of the mirror. But let that be. Let's go to supper. That is the thing we should be thinking of, just like the others."

He was about to draw him along when, behind them, a door slammed and some one called out to them.

It was the stretcher-bearer. He approached them with long strides and asked from afar: "Can you tell me where I can get some tea or rum or anything hot? I haven't had anything warm for thirty hours."

Weiler saw that the man was a corporal and saluted. Gadsby observed the stranger as he slowly took in all the details of Weiler's personality. Then, suddenly, in civilian fashion, he offered his hand.

"Never mind that sort of thing. We seem to

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be among ourselves." He spoke lightly, pressed Weiler's hand and then turned again to Gadsky.

"Isn't there such a thing as an inn around here?"

Gadsky's face had brightened. Everything seemed different to him. He began to like the corporal. When they were unloading the wounded he had been too tragically fascinated by the fearful bandages and the flickering restlessness of the dying to notice the man. Now first he observed him. In spite of his long limbs, his heavy hands, his sensual lips and the rough modeling of his features, there was something of tenderness and of sadness about him. And Gadsky was quite taken, too, by the way in which he had treated Weiler and refused to be misled by the horribly baggy uniform which represented Stuff's final malice. And so he invited the man to share their solemn farewell meal with them and boasted humorously of the culinary delights which they had to offer.

"You'll even get one of our fresh eggs," he said, "honestly bought, too, not requisitioned. I'll give you my own, if necessary. Because it's a wonderful feeling that in spite of all obstacles men of a certain kind will find each other. And even if they tricked us out like bushmen, that secret free-masonry would still prevail."

The corporal laughed. "You'll withdraw both your favor and your egg. My perspicacity isn't so great. But a while ago when you were working with the severely wounded and were hand-

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ling an artillery man with a terrible abdominal wound, one of you used the word 'moribund.' That's how I knew." He was silent for a moment as they set out for Gadsby's billet. Then suddenly in a dry tone and with an angry gleam in his eyes he added: "I'm bound to say that as a rule I prefer common men. The officers of the reserve and those who are ambitious of joining them—well, I could tell you a good deal."

He started off again and the other two exchanged astonished glances behind his back. Then Gadsby went ahead and as he pushed open the heavy gate of the yard and ushered the corporal into the darkness, he couldn't help comparing him to the hungry, tousled peasants' dogs who wandered about. These animals were driven forth by hunger; they were fierce and yet humble; they showed their teeth while their eyes begged for a bite. And in this man's eyes, too, there was a beseeching look while his mouth seemed grim and hard.

Weiler led the corporal by the hand across the yard, in the middle of which there was a huge shell hole. Gadsby remained behind, and was soon heard talking to a woman who said in a sharp, pointed way: "Je n'ai rien, rien, rien." Weiler at last found the keyhole and took their guest into a long, musty room which by the light of a pocket-lantern revealed itself as an abandoned school-room.

The forms had been piled up high against the rear wall. On the other side there were two beds,

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and, between them, a straw-mattress with a rolled up military coat as a pillow and a spread that had once been sky blue. On a little platform, in front of the windows, stood the teacher's desk. A great ironing board had been put across it so that a large, horizontal table had been built. This table was covered with books, tins, half emptied bottles. There were two real chairs and one school bench without a back.

The little cast iron stove was red hot and seemed to fill the large place with ghostly restlessness, so that the whole place struck the corporal as surprisingly emptied, strangely dispeopled in the light of the coal oil lamp with its quivering shadows. He looked about and smiled sadly at the map of France against the wall, which was now flanked, in all innocence, of course, by the trench-helmets and side-arms of the billeted Germans. Then he dropped wearily into a chair and gazed at his great muddy boots, while Weiler busied himself with plates and glasses in a corner.

"You're well taken care of here," he said after a long pause. And when the voices of Gadsky and of the woman of the house became audible in the yard, he added: "Your friend seems to be on excellent terms with her."

Weiler emerged from his corner into the light of the lamp before he answered. "The poor woman's husband is over in the French lines, and she always complains that she can't look at our rifles without thinking that it may be from one

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of them that some day the bullet will fly that will widow her. And it is frightful. She trembles for her husband and has to look on as we load ourselves with munition. Of course, it's the same with our women in Upper Alsace and was so in East Prussia. That doesn't make it the less painful."

The corporal jumped up. "You haven't been at the front very long, I take it, since you are still able to let the fate of individuals move you. That is the first impulse which you must crush in you if you want to endure it. A certain Frenchwoman! You musn't let the idea come to you. We dare not think of individual Frenchmen in the enemy trenches, any more than they dare think of Karl Schulze or Ernst Müller. You must work with collective concepts: wounded, dead, enemies, comrades. And thus too you must regard the inhabitants of the occupied areas. You must simply merge your French teacher's life in the mass. You saw me unload my cart awhile ago? To-morrow I'll come with a similar load, and day after to-morrow with another. And that has been my life for seven months. Nothing has changed but the landscape. Sometimes it was in Poland, sometimes in Flanders, to-day it's near Verdun, to-morrow it may be in the Carpathians. Try to imagine what would have become of me if I hadn't learned to think of men simply in the mass, if I knew to-day whom I had picked up yesterday, and would mourn to-morrow over the little

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sharp-shooter both of whose legs were torn off! I've restricted myself to numbers. To-day my cases numbered thirty-seven—including six severely wounded. That's all I dare to know. You must do the same. It's the only point of view that can keep a man sane."

Weiler did not answer. He watched the other walk up and down with great strides and observed the restlessness in the quivering, strangely crumpled face. He hung his head, for he realized that behind the man's enforced roughness there lurked an all but irrepressible despair. He turned around and was about to go back to his corner when the corporal suddenly emerged from his thoughts into speech again.

"You haven't, I know, grasped my peculiar vision yet. We cannot let ourselves be crushed. We, each one of us, is bearing his share of the intolerable burden that is making the knees of humanity tremble. We dare not increase it—we dare not. Here I've known you for one hour and I've seen you go behind the barracks to the little sharp-shooter and take upon your feeble shoulders the added burden of his woe, and now you tell me that you also act as a burden bearer for this poor woman who has to watch you equip yourself for the hunting of her husband . . . Let me tell you how matters stand. Recall some hot, old-fashioned summer day in times of peace, far in the country, when the flies were so bad that something had to be done. People placed on the table a subtly contrived globe of glass which let

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the flies get in at the top. But there was no return for them, and exhausted at last, they fell into the water at the bottom and were drowned. The poor beasts raged and agonized, swam on their backs and struggled with their tiny legs—and we sat at the table reading or talking and almost unconscious of their despairing buzzing. We didn't really notice that a life and death struggle was taking place before us. Well, for flies substitute—men. That is war. The substitution isn't hard to make. Men are falling like flies. Let them lament and struggle but don't look in their direction. For we are all in the same great trap. And take my word for it: whoever doesn't dedicate himself wholly to the task of getting himself out of the trap with sound limbs will die the death of a fly."

Weiler twitched. The comparison had awakened him. He grasped the corporal by the arm and his voice was hoarse with excitement.

"That's just what I shall never understand—never! Imagine the generals on both sides who sit behind their respective fronts quite comfortably and are responsible for the slaughter and really treat their men as if they were mere vermin! Can your mind grasp it that there are men—Germans, Frenchmen—who coldly plan an attack that will cost ten thousand human lives, give the command for it, and then calmly sit down to dine in expectation of the bulletins of victory? Listen! A few weeks ago, immediately after our detrainment, we marched by the head-

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quarters of our army at noon. The gentlemen were sitting on the terrace of a château taking their after-dinner coffee and we could see the glint of the porcelain and the glitter of the silver and the blue puffs of cigarette smoke. And there floated toward us the sound of calm speech and even now and then, of laughter. And on the road, on a motorcycle, a messenger on his way to headquarters met us. And the man's face was still a sort of death mask from the horrors he had seen. He called out to us: 'You'd better look out! It's hell out there! Oh, it's sheer hell!' And those two pictures I have been carrying about with me ever since—the terrace in the sunshine and that man's face. And whenever I lie in the trench under fire, or see a poor devil like that little sharp-shooter, I seem to see in the background of the war those sunny châteaux in which the gentlemen on the general staffs of all the armies concerned drink their after-dinner coffee and smoke their cigarettes."

He had spoken very swiftly and now took a deep breath and there was a keen despair in his large, shining eyes. And when the corporal only gave a sarcastic smile and shrug, he burst out again and cried in his cruel indignation: "How do you know what the sufferings of a fly really are? Who knows what its little life means to it? No one. But those gentlemen know very well what it means to a man to die. From the general down to the junior telephone operator on his staff, they have each been in some room of

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death; they know how breaking eyes still cling to this visible world that is all we know, and how the poor hands grasp for one last contact with life! In cities, they put straw in the streets and the tramways stop ringing their bells and no one passes without a shadow in his soul—if but one man is dying—one! And here these gentlemen have learned to laugh while day by day thousands—thousands——”

The corporal interrupted him. “Precisely. One dying man is sacred in their eyes. But a thousand who die, ten thousand dead—ah, then the emphasis is shifted on to the number. All they feel is—how many? Hush, some one is coming!” He interrupted himself at once and listened tensely.

Weiler’s lips still quivered. It was hard for him to master the indignation of his soul so suddenly. The sudden stopping of the corporal brought their position home to them again. Had the whole world been turned into a “Holy Russia?” Were all free men in all countries in the position of servants who must stop their gossip at the approach of the master’s step? . . . A deep shame took the place of his anger. “It’s only Gadsky with the food,” he said. Then he slunk back to the stove and got the plates and glasses and put them on the table, bowed by the feeling of their deep humiliation.

Gadsky had the air of a victor. He had a steaming bowl in which the promised eggs were swimming and his success had brightened his

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mood. In his conference with the woman of the house and his desire to be hospitable he had forgotten everything else and it took some minutes before he became aware of the fact that the other two men had talked themselves into an entirely different mood during his absence.

"Mme. Veriot is an angel," he cried, and next to the bowl he put down two dust-covered bottles which he had brought in under his arms. "She has given me the two last bottles of wine out of her cellar. Of course, I had to tell her that our new guest is a common school teacher, too." And while he moved the bench nearer to the table and cleared one of the chairs for their guest, he added laughingly: "We all pretend to be teachers to please her, you know."

"That's a queer sort of confidence game," the corporal answered absent-mindedly.

"Oh," Gadsby protested with a laugh, "not so queer. Our immediate superior officer Fröbel is really a teacher in civilian life. We should never have gotten this splendid place without him. Even my very decent French wouldn't have helped. But I trotted out the group picture of the Fröbel family. And no one can convince Mme. Veriot that a teacher can be a bad man. She knows from experience that a teacher really prefers the rod for children to the rifle for men. Occasionally, of course, she remembers that we are enemies. But then I say to her in my nicest French: 'Come now, your good husband is also forced to try to kill our comrades!' And that

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obviously sensible remark brings back her friendliness at once."

He had grown graver again during his last sentences. He looked at Weiler, then at their guest, and when the silence lengthened his superficial and half-enforced cheerfulness vanished too. "What's gotten into you?" He turned to Weiler was a touch of annoyance. "All we need now, of course, is Fröbel with his grave-digger's expression. Then the funeral feast would be complete. You're usually more sensible."

Weiler raised his head slowly. "Where is Fröbel?"

"Oh, he's an awful fool," Gadsby replied. "He's standing in the square and gazes yearningly at the wounded. And when they're put into the ambulances and the ambulances start back home, the tears trickle down his face. He'll go on until some one tells the captain and then it won't be so pleasant for him. I wouldn't like to be a member of his squad."

Weiler had listened impatiently. "Do you really think it so incomprehensible that the poor fellow gazes at the autos? Is there a keener temptation than the sight of those cars that go home? The road home is daily before his eyes. It's like a rope, at the other end of which his wife and children are tugging with desperate energy to pull their unique and irreplaceable Karl Fröbel back out of danger! Can you blame him for gazing at it, turning back to it like an ox that is led to the slaughter?"

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"I don't think your comparison is a very honorable one. What is the use of his human reason if it does not teach him to resign himself to the inevitable? Can you tell me . . ."

Weiler had been walking through the room. He stopped in front of Gadsby and interrupted him. "Can you tell me what the reason has to do with war? If you set fire to Fröbel's house I assure you that he will save his little daughter at the risk of his life. He might even risk it for some object for which his wife and he had toiled and saved. But it is precisely his reason that prevents him from resigning himself. He knows very well that poor M. Veriot has just as little desire to harm Frau Fröbel as he has to harm Mme. Veriot. How often have you yourself insisted that it was much easier for those men, who go to their death in the profoundly sincere conviction that there is, humanly speaking, no choice—that we must slay the enemy or he will slay us! And as for enthusiasm! A man who, for thirty-five years, has lived the life of an angle-worm cannot suddenly soar with the eagles. And you're the last one to reproach him with his sobriety of mind. You've yourself pointed out to him how the papers—French and English and German—all play the same game of lies. And you have told him of your French and English friends. And now that you have destroyed the simplicities of his patriotic faith, you . . ."

"Well now, look here! I beg of you! I haven't

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anything against Fröbel. But I can't have you make me responsible."

He was standing upright and waving his arm. Suddenly the corporal touched him and said: "Permit me one question: are you going to the firing-line for the first time to-day?"

Gadsky looked in astonishment at the hand that touched his arm. He suspected for a moment some quiet irony in the question. But the calm steadfastness of the sad, compassionate eyes at once soothed him. "Yes and no," he answered hesitatingly. "We've been taken to the immediate front five times, but each time without being utilized. The barrage bit into us pretty thoroughly each time. Once it fell precisely on the second line of trenches in which we were waiting and our losses were actually greater than those of the battalion that repulsed the enemy attack. Another time the expected attack didn't come off. Last week again no one seemed to know why we were taken out at all. Our losses seemed like sheer waste and, of course, we weren't due for any distinctions either, since we were not technically in the fight. But it may be significant if I tell you that our captain hasn't the iron cross yet." And after a brief pause he added with a bitter smile, "We'll fetch it for him to-day without fail because we're going into the front trenches to relieve other troops. I suppose I ought to say 'Thank God,' or 'at last!' The captain expects his men to be burning for their chance of trying out their bayonets. Even

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his adjutant, a former teller in the German Bank, acts as if he could hardly restrain himself any longer. He thinks it's the last word of good form to lick his lips at the expectation of murdering or being murdered."

His silence was full of thought and he looked surreptitiously over at Weiler who was still walking back and forth. Then he turned again to their guest and, in spite of himself, used the old, vexed tone: "Don't you think, too, that one has to have a very good memory in order to cling to life when one is here? I really think they make it damned easy for us to say farewell to the sun. Whoever has a spark of personal pride left in him is as well prepared as a cancer patient who desires to be relieved of his misery even by death. Of course, I'm not thinking of Fröbel. For people like him life is its own sufficient aim and justification. But men who have always been accustomed to use life for some higher aim, the intellectuals who were always willing to spend themselves and their strength for something beyond themselves—for them the problem as to what they are asked to die for is of supreme importance. It isn't true, in addition, that war is the only Moloch that demands to be fed with human flesh. When, on the first day of general mobilization, I hastened back from Italy, the conductor on the train that took us through the Alpine tunnel told me that when the tunnel was dug the water rose unexpectedly at one point and twenty men were drowned. Those men were

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just as anxious to have their chance at life as Fröbel. As for me, I am willing, if necessary, to die for the sake of a tunnel that brings two great nations nearer to one another and confirms man's mastery over nature. But there is, you see, that difference between the men who live only for salary increases and the few who don't measure existence exclusively by their stomachs and their bank accounts. Every thinking man must be capable of throwing his life away for an idea. But I no longer see one in this war! I see greed, vengefulness, above all, a stupid helplessness to restrain the raging fires on all sides alike. At the start I volunteered. . . .!"

"So did I." The corporal nodded sadly. His gray, faithful eyes were fastened on Gadsby's face. The latter had lost the thread of his discourse for a moment. But now he plunged back as though all the stored up brooding, the bitterness of all the weeks had to be given forth, as though he feared to die without having expressed himself thoroughly. "And so, since no visible or noble aim is left, what does it come to? That men are trained like bloodhounds to jump at each other's throats. And we have endured that training. There is the unspeakable shame that is poisoning the soul of mankind. What decent man in any country will, if ever peace comes, be able to face his own defiled soul again? Who will be able to cleanse himself from his own submission to dirty, arbitrary force, from the tyranny of men who are in no wise his equals—

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who are without vision or culture or inner dignity? Do you think that one has to be particularly lofty to feel that? I don't deny the efficiency of the methods employed. In the long run no soldier in any army will go on fighting unless he fears the court martial at his back more than the enemy before him. And why should he? At first each nation raised the cry of self-defense! Very well. But to-day? Murder will out! So will greed! Our militarists want the Belgian coast, their French colleagues want the German coal country, the English colleagues want Africa and the whole Orient. What is left? A very simple formula for the men actually fighting: You go on killing simply to go on living. Whoever isn't satisfied with this war-aim had better not, at least, ladle out subtleties to his comrades . . . "

Weiler could control himself no longer. His face was crimson and he cried out to Gadsby: "Why do you say that? How dare you say that? Don't you know? But of course you do . . ." He seemed about to leap at Gadsby.

The corporal had been watching Weiler. He moved nearer to Gadsby and turned around. He begged Weiler to forgive him for interrupting him. Then he said: "I wanted to explain why I annoyed you with the question just now whether you were going into action for the first time to-day. It is because every time I visit the rear lines and the billets I witness the same curious struggle. And it is always the best

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friends and comrades who seem fated to vent on each other their suppressed irritation, their strangely hostile moods. Among the common men it usually leads to little fights. And the men, later on, can't possibly tell what started it. I've never known it to fail. It seems almost as if people had to rehearse the hatred which they are supposed to feel in face of the enemy and for which they haven't the slightest natural aptitude. But in reality that deep irritation is directed against all one's comrades collectively and against each one in particular. And the reason is this: The consciousness knows dimly that if all one's comrades were suddenly to disappear, if there were left no one to jeer or despise one, then one could calmly turn one's back to danger and resolve to return to life. We're no better off than shipwrecked men. The sharks are showing their fangs. And a rope is within our reach and we cannot take it because we dare not risk the judgment of the onlookers."

"An excellent comparison," Gadsby said with an ironic smile. "But it applies only to the people at home. They are the onlookers who have firm planks under them, who are safe from danger and whom . . ."

"Whom, however," the corporal continued for him, "one doesn't see. But our comrades are on the spot. Their example controls our actions. And in that fact lurks the secret of our irritation against them. Each nurses a little enmity against the other, because that other contributes

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his infinitesimal share to the total social pressure that drives him to the butcher's block. And what do you expect? It's like a terrible mutual corraling process. I grant you gladly that the drivers at home who are safe make the most bloodthirsty gestures. I have an old uncle there, aged sixty-eight, who gives a prize—a handsome cigar case—for every slacker that one of his acquaintances hounds into publicity. But these people can't hurt us. We'd soon get rid of them without those others who are willing to swim and to sink at one's side."

Gadsky did not reply but stared at the lamp. Before his inner vision appeared again the great, empty square with the shaft of the wagon against the darkening sky. Again he saw the frightened faces of the soldiers with the secret, lurking expectation in their eyes. And a strange pressure seemed to descend upon him, for he knew now that the stranger's voice had given utterance to his own most hidden thoughts. And Weiler, too, was silent and walked up and down, shamed by the cold objectivity with which the corporal laid bare the feelings against which he had been struggling in his innermost heart. And he felt the impulse to go over to Gadsky and press his hand and ask his pardon for the violence he had shown. But his dislike of any emotional expansiveness restrained him.

The corporal seemed lost in thought. Drops of the red wine had been spilt on the table, and

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using a burnt out match he drew little channels of red on the pale wood.

There was no sound in the room for a time except the resonant steps of Weiler. Then suddenly the corporal threw back his head and said: "You see, when we met and I said something hostile about the educated classes, you suddenly looked at me almost as though I were a dangerous animal. And now it turns out that you have just my own deep grudge against them."

He laughed a hoarse laugh as Gadsby gazed at him in utter astonishment and went on. "Of course you have! You will not assert that it is the humble men who pretend that they are nowhere so happy as at the front. Whenever I have seen a man say, with an artificial gleam in his eyes, that he hoped soon to return to the front, it was invariably a member of the educated classes. Peasants and proletarians haven't the inner elasticity that is necessary for a man to adopt an attitude as a matter of good form and patriotic custom. Those poor fellows go where they are led in dull resignation, do as they are commanded, fight and lie down to die, if need be, in the honest conviction that it is probably necessary since it has been so arranged. I bite my lips till the blood comes each time I pick up a poor fellow of this kind. For these men are exactly in the position of the stokers on an ocean liner. They see nothing of the beauties of the voyage. But if trouble comes they are the first to drown. And they go to their death without

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ever having reached the deck. They sweat over their fires; they don't know the direction of the voyage; they obey orders blindly, and strangely enough, they don't grudge the happy passengers their free vision and clean air and easy life. And they do all that to be rid of all responsibility. Can you imagine anything worse than the deceiving of such trust? And think of the crowd that has walked the promenade deck all these years—on the liners of all the nations—and has not watched the mighty ones on the bridge nor questioned whither the course was set. But now these fine passengers throng the life-boats and the humble man below pays the piper again and fills the great graveyards of the war."

"That's not just," Gadsby exclaimed. "The common people are in an absolute majority. If you consider the numerical proportion, you will find that just as many——"

"Oh, no," the corporal cried passionately, and shook his head so energetically that strands of hair fell across his forehead. "Yours is the graver injustice. It isn't a question of percentages. A hundred thousand dead are more than a thousand, even if the figures represent the same percentage of quite artificial divisions. But even as an argument yours won't hold water. The common soldier is cannon fodder—precisely as it is at sea. For the fine people above there are, after all, life-belts and life-boats. Whoever can manage it avoids infantry service and brings his

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money and his influence to bear on the situation."

"Not among us," Gadsky said earnestly. "Truth is truth. It may be so in the enemy countries . . ."

The corporal laughed a jeering, aggressive laugh. "It's not unknown even among us. That it is far rarer, I grant you. The only question is: why? You haven't, after all, reflected very deeply about the inner connection of things. For first you are indignant over the wretched hypocrisy that pretends in its disgusting way that war as we see it is a great and glorious thing, and then you boast with righteous pride that there are so few among us who have the courage to show that they don't wish to die!"

But Gadsky's patience was at an end. "My dear man, if you interpret anything I have said as a defense of slackers—I'm sorry. I tried to make my meaning as clear as possible. It is just this dull, indifferent crowd with its mere animal patience that I detest. I protest against the bestial injustice of trying to depress all men to this crowd's level, just because it is easier to do that than to elevate the masses to one's own standard. But you must not draw the conclusion that I am hostile to the strong, to those who know and yet have their enthusiasm and make the supreme sacrifice joyously!"

Weiler jumped up and shot like a bolt over to the table where Gadsky was. "Joyous sacrifice," he repeated. "Are you going to defend that

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hypocrisy now? You're like a weathercock. Your mother loved assuredly you and nursed you when necessary. But it never, just as surely, occurred to her, to be jubilant over an illness of yours because it gave her an opportunity for self-sacrifice. And war is nothing but a disease, a disease of blood and tears."

"I wasn't talking of jubilation," Gadsby said drily and waved his hand with a touch of irritation as the corporal interrupted him again.

"But there was jubilation, certainly in North Germany, and just as certainly in Paris. The mobilization found me far in the South of Germany and I was able to observe the mood in many places. Of course there were everywhere thoughtless howlers. But I remember how surprised I was when near Halle I met the first radiant faces. Don't misunderstand me. In the South of Germany, too, every man was ready to do what he conceived to be his duty. But behind the iron determination there lurked a sense of horror. And the higher one ascended in the social scale the more profound one saw the grief and disappointment to be over the fact that the twentieth century could still endure such things. I am not sure that a jubilant tone would have been tolerated there. In Berlin, as in Paris and, for all I know, in London, it was just the other way around. In the East End I saw a few poor, grief-stricken women and tearful farewells. But Unter den Linden the mood was a festive one. Ladies in costly gowns and white-haired privy

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councillors rejoiced over the prospect as though war were a necessary or a desirable thing. It wasn't enough there to go when you were called. It was not enough to assent and do your duty. Whoever wanted to be known as a red-blooded patriot had to accept the war not only without sorrow, but with a sort of self-righteous joy. And stories have filtered through from other countries that tell—in accordance with the differences in national temperament—the same story. The intellectuals and the bourgeoisie of the world gloated over the war!"

"Not over the war," Gadsky protested. "Not over the war. That's perverting the facts. I know that there were foolish and base individuals. And I don't deny that there are people who think it's good form to be bloodthirsty and rabid in case of war. I'm the last man to wish to defend these vile fools and snobs. But I do deny that this sort was very numerous among us. The honest exaltation of those August days of 1914, at least, came from deeper and nobler sources. Whoever does make a great sacrifice, should make it gladly."

"Oh, how splendid," came from Weiler with fierce sarcasm. "The instance of the mother again: Hurrah! my boy has typhoid! Now I can nurse him with complete self-abnegation."

The corporal acknowledged Weiler's remark with a smile. Then he shoved him very gently aside and went close up to Gadsky. "You're simply contradicting us now because you've been

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put in a defensive position," he said almost heartily and with that ingratiating calm which at once passed over the argument like a current of refreshing air. "And also," he went on, "because there are things that one doesn't like to hear said even if one secretly harbors exactly the same view. I know that feeling. I've had it happen to me to defend something simply because some one else has been aggressive. But you're in an intellectual blind alley just now. There is no sense in denying the effect after you've granted the cause. I have no wish to be hard on my country. But I wish to see clearly. Other countries have other faults quite as grave. And the faults of both have been produced by historical and other causes that are, so far as we know, not within any conscious human control. And therefore I am not afraid to say that, even in peace, military ideas and manners were more fashionable among us than elsewhere. A man who wanted to impress women of a Sunday—what did he do? He pretended to be an officer in mufti. Those trifles go deep. Poets and bank directors and even film heroes copied the monocle and the arrogance of the officers' corps in the sweat of their brow. In Vienna the young men imitated the great actors and the famous poets, in France they copied the Parliamentary phrasemakers, in Italy every callow youth tried to trill Caruso's aria from 'La Tosca' when he wanted to impress his sweetheart. But in our part of the world the type to be copied was the military

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one. Restaurants were fashionable if officers frequented them. If your butcher's daughter got married, he wanted at least an officer of the reserve at her wedding party. And so, when war actually came, the fashionable thing to do was to imitate the attitude of the military caste toward it. It was good form, whether you felt it or not, to welcome the war just as the officers did. And they forgot that fifty years of laurels which they had not yet earned really changed the status of the officers who, in the old days, did deserve respect for the dangers they were constantly ready to undergo, the death which they constantly courted. But why do you shake your head so fiercely?"

Weiler almost hissed. "God knows they're not so badly off to-day. And at least it's their business. No one ever honored poor Fröbel, no one ever imitated him. Now he has to be quite as ready to risk his neck as any one. Even the Kohns and the Finckelsteins, whom the officers would have nothing to do with when everything was safe, are now permitted to put on the officers' coat which was once supposed to be too good for them, and are graciously allowed to shed their blood! Therefore, I say the unheard-of thing is that the officers are still given special privileges, privileges which may conceivably have been their due at a time when the plain citizen was permitted to remain at home on the understanding that they and they alone took on themselves the duty of protecting the state with

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their lives. But how is it to-day? *We* are conscripted, but *they* keep their grandeur. Their calling has ceased to be one of special danger and therefore of special honor in an age when war rests just as heavily on the shop assistant and the digger of ditches."

The corporal nodded in agreement and laid his heavy hand soothingly on Weiler's shoulder. "In fact far more heavily. The officer doesn't carry a pack of eighty pounds; he doesn't have to endure the impudence of men who might be his sons. If he's no longer young, he's at least a major and sits safely behind the sand-bags in the well-protected dugout. Every officer is at an advantage. Even my wretched corporal's stripes relieve me of half the sorest burdens. I know what it means to be able to rest five minutes longer, to be able to send some one else on an errand at the end of a grueling day, to dip my head in cooling water a little sooner. If you hadn't interrupted me, you would have seen that I hadn't any intention of defending the military caste. No one can deny that the honor in which they are held among us is the thoughtless, untested survival of a tradition that has long ceased to have any justification. Therefore it was their duty to earn again and earn now the rights . . ."

Gadsky, who had been walking up and down in his turn, now stopped short and laughed out of the darkness. "It's safe to say they felt under no such obligation. There's a dear little ensign

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in our company, a sort of white blackbird who should really have been a painter but, being a general's son, was not permitted to choose another calling than the army. I wish you could hear his stories. You speak of an outlived tradition, of the officers earning their privileges. I tell you those men have a subtle contempt for any one but themselves whatever his services to the state and to mankind and think that he ought to be honored by the privilege which conscription brings him of dying in their noble company."

"And the saddest thing is," the corporal said triumphantly, "that so many men actually feel honored. Those are the very people I had in mind, the men who, when some one is around, curse the wound that takes them out of the battle and who in August, 1914, welcomed the war like a fashionable diversion. They are the traitors who made any opposition impossible. That's why I hate them. For fifty years and longer the common people of the world have borne the burden and expected the men of learning and of science to bear theirs too. And the men of thought and science did nothing of the kind. They knew the diplomatic history of their times; they knew the furious competition in armaments. What did they do? But I am not concerned with the enemy countries now. They must answer to their own peoples. I attack our own men of thought, of light and of leading who permitted a great and a good people to become

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the involuntary tool of a statesmanship and a method of international life that is several hundred years behind the times. It was our business to see and warn! But no one knew or no one dared. And just because of the preëminence of the German intellectuals in the world do I blame them most bitterly for their neglect and for their acquiescence in this insensate thing. And the same is true of the socialists of all countries—the men whose profession it was to be in the opposition. These same people who shouted about militarism in Germany and about the oppression of inferior races in England and about what not in France, had forgotten all these fine things when the test, the great test, came!”

He had grown more and more impassioned and had given himself up wholly to his righteous wrath. When no one answered him, he spread out his arms in a gesture of resignation. Then he added: “I understand perfectly how one’s fundamental decency rebels against the universal cowardice. Because the whole of this so-called great age is in the grip of a great cowardice. So long as the mortality of mutineers is likely to be ninety per cent. in excess of the mortality among ‘heroes,’ there will always, naturally, be an excess of heroes. But whoever realizes that as keenly as you do, ought to have the courage to face the fact boldly. The greatest coward is surely he who consciously plays the game as the safest under the circumstances, although he knows perfectly well what he, as a

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matter of the deepest reality, ought to do. The worst cowards are the men of compromise who steered against the current so long as the stream splashed gently but who, when it was in spate and produced whirlpools, changed their course with a great display of phrases. They are the cowards and not the common man who endured everything as he would endure hail or storms."

Out of the dusk came Gadsby's voice. And there was the cutting sharpness of an indignant sarcasm in it. "You are indeed right. To-day when the wounded were unloaded I made some observations again. Your dear common men stood there and their faces were as glum as though they felt the wounds on their own bodies. Each one would have given the world to be able to take to his heels. But what would have happened, do you think, if some brave man had proclaimed to them with the tongue of men and angels all that we hide and repress? These fine fellows would have thrown themselves upon him; they would have obeyed the command to fetter him and out of the initiative of their own feeling of duty they would have added a few kicks. You reproach me because, as you say, I have never reflected on the connection of things. I think it's you who have things upside down. You take the butcher for the sacrificial lamb. Don't you know that it is this inert mass that drags us down like lead? These silent ones with their accursed patience form the stream that drags us to destruction when the flood-gates are opened. It

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is we who must be silent and who must submit, because this huge herd knows nothing but the path of its bell-wethers. A man who would have tried to remain true to himself that fatal August would have perished under the heels of the mob."

The corporal moved away from the table, out of the light of the lamp into the shadow and his great heavy body loomed up near Gadsby. His words were full of wrath. "And why are these people a dead weight? Did they suddenly submit against their better knowledge and belief like ourselves? No! You and I and all our kind have left them to the mercy of the state, to the mercy of a slave-education! What have the common people heard in church and school all over Europe except the blare of the nationalist and the war-monger? And what have the states done? They have rewarded these shouters and patriotic teachers and have crushed, subtly or roughly, every one who protested. And when that happened, what did the intellectuals do? They drew caricatures of those in power. They jested cheaply over the phrases on which the common people were fed. But did they ever go to the people? Did they ever arise freely against the powerful organizations that taught Europe enmity and rivalry and chauvinism and filled men with the fear and hate of their neighbors? And now, now, you want to blame the victims?"

His voice gave out for a moment. He breathed deeply before he could go on. "We were the cowards and we alone. The burdens we have to

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bear are our just due. I am tempted to rejoice over every one who now groans under the yoke which he did nothing to lift so long as it hurt only the neck of others. Whoever had no dealings with the people and thought his light too precious for their eyes—the artists and the thinkers and the men of letters—is reaping his reward now that the helplessness which he permitted tears him along.”

Gadsky had sat down on his bed and supported his head in his hands. But when the corporal, with a gesture of self-contempt, interrupted himself, he arose slowly and came forward. “Well, we are being punished.” He said it quietly and bent over the lamp to light a cigarette. His words had sadness in them now and humility. “You may well be satisfied. Whoever stood aside in peace out of arrogance and indifference has the hardest lot to bear now. The people don’t smell any better in war. But whether they are really so entirely innocent of all things I still doubt. Perhaps it was more so in Germany than in other countries. But I am not so sure. The fact is that the great mass is everywhere instinctively on the side of power and of those in power. There is little general love for the martyr, for opposition. The people admire the show and fact of power and awaken but slowly to the truth that they suffer from it. Usually they glory in it as if it belonged to them. If we were cowards you must grant, at least,

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that we received little encouragement to be brave."

The corporal was too weary to take up the challenge again. He shrugged his shoulders. "I didn't say it would have been easy." A moment later he jumped up. "For heaven's sake! It's past eight o'clock. I must be off!" And as he gathered up his pipe and tobacco pouch and hurried to where his greatcoat was spread over the forms, he said with a strangely humble regret, half jesting and half in bitter earnest: "I must say that I haven't shown myself very grateful for your hospitality. First I ate up your food and then I filled you up with superfluous truths, which each might better keep to himself. Don't resent it, please. It's my own loss too. My two hours of respite are over and instead of resting, I've talked myself hoarse. But that's so human. Our disgust over the great murder makes us fight our real friends in the intervals." He turned to thank Weiler who was holding his coat for him. When he saw the poet's helpless sadness and the great, anguished questions in his eyes, the corporal fell silent. For a minute he busied himself with his glove. Then he turned and, placing his large hands tenderly on the other's fragile shoulders, looked ruefully into the eyes that met his. "I hope you're not really taking my chatter to heart. A good deal of it is nonsense. At least, that's all past and gone. The main thing is to get out of it all safely. There will be something worth doing for each one of us afterwards."

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The spectacle moved Gadsby. It was curious to see this giant with his uncouth limbs bending over Weiler. Who would have suspected this hidden tenderness in him? His rough and almost brutal voice had a deep mildness now and one felt that he hated himself at this moment for every trace that his words had left in Weiler's defenseless soul.

Finally he tore himself away and held out his hand to Gadsby. Then the latter saw that it was the corporal who in his regret and sorrow needed consolation now. He took his hand and laughed. "Don't imagine that without your kind help we wouldn't have argued just the same. We always do, you know. And we're grateful for it. It wouldn't be endurable without that relief. In your absence we might have taken different sides, but the questions at issue would have been the same. It is so everywhere. You'll forgive me for saying that you neither invented them nor brought them with you. On the contrary. You were a reliable listener, and that's about the greatest service that one man can render another out here."

A great change came over the face of the corporal. He stood still in all his ruggedness for a space. Then he threw his arms out in a great gesture of lamentation and the speech that came from him was in a hollow whisper, as though he were revealing a great secret.

"It is so everywhere. Men sit together and speak as we have spoken to-night. In every

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trench, in every hospital garden, in the dark corridors of barracks—everywhere they crouch and put their heads together and speak of the fearful consequences of the victory they are helping to win. When at night I roll myself in my coat and put my ear to the earth I seem to hear all those voices. I hear them argue and rebel as we did to-night. And when morning comes they march by me unafraid, their rifles in their hands. Not one recoils at the imminence of death; not one dares to speak openly. At the word of command they fight like tigers. Is that not strange and unthinkable? And many such lie even now in the great graves. And I tell you that one could find whole divisions at the front composed of men who think exactly as we do, and fear nothing as they fear the triumph of the forces that victory would unleash. There are whole-souled men among them, free minds whom nothing could subdue in peace, who resented all pressure and who now give their blood for the prison that is to be built about them. Never was there such a combat! Men have died for a conviction, for their freedom or for booty. But never except in this war have men fought for a victory which they feared.”

He still stood with his arms outstretched. His eyes wandered from one to the other of the pallid faces beside him. When no answer came to him his long arms fell to his side and from his great chest there came a cry of wild prophecy.

“God help us if we win! And I fear that we

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shall! God help the victors whoever they be! For their rage and cruelty in war will be as nothing to the rage and cruelty and monstrous tyranny with which they will turn upon their own people. The victorious army—whichever it is—is forging the chains that will bite into its flesh when the victory is won. For the victors will believe that their victory has justified their deeds and will drag their peoples at their chariot wheels through the very dust!"

His stone-gray forehead had flamed and his whole body seemed to palpitate with inner fire.

Gadsky and Weiler dared not look up. The whole large room seemed to vibrate with the man's prophetic rage and grief and despair. In vain they sought for some words to soothe him. And it was with something like relief that they saw him at last turn to go. At the open door he looked at them once more and a deep irony distorted his large features. He saluted and called out: "Good luck and victory, then—provided our principles be remembered!"

His irony fell into the room like a heavy stone. Then they saw him melt into the darkness which hung like a black curtain across the open door.

When, after a long search, he had found his driver and horses and helped hitch them on the great square, he saw that the battalion was assembling.

Loiterers hastened past him, gasping under the heavy packs which gave their silhouettes a

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grotesque outline in the dim light. There was a crunching and rattling as one straggler after another joined the long, black, sinuous line of men that was lost in the darkness at both ends.

Just as the driver was climbing on the box, the commanding officer's voice rang out acridly and the long line grew rigid. Now an oppressive silence lay over the square, a convulsive silence into which the loud words of an invisible small group, somewhere near the center of the square, rose like a challenge.

A flash-light flamed up, held by an arm that showed in the small cone of light, and the officer's voice threw name after name against that line of men.

The corporal stood on his wagon and grasped the driver's hand. "Wait!" he said and listened tensely.

He saw a strange spectacle. To prevent one man's answering the roll-call for another beside himself, the order had been given that as each name was called the man in question should light up his face with his own flash-light for identification. And so the little flames danced like will-o'-the-wisps about the square and each time lifted out of the darkness one ghostly head and face that was immediately resubmerged in the black air.

The driver groaned, so heavily was the corporal leaning on him. A name was called: "Fröbel." The corporal drew himself up, but the man's face had melted back into the darkness

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before he could see it. But the word "here" had sounded as firm and sure as that uttered by the other voices. It was so with Gadsby, too. And then there followed great numbers of indifferent names and the driver was about to turn around with a question on his lips. At that moment Weiler's face flamed up for a moment. It seemed near enough to grasp, though wreathed by thick shadows and half hidden by the trench-helmet. And his voice uttered the single necessary word in a strange, hard fashion with all the conventional military coldness and assurance.

The corporal nodded to the driver and the wagon hastened on. Then he threw himself back on the moist straw that still held the odor of congealed blood, and with a wild curse raised his gnarled fists to the starry heaven whose glitter sank upon him like the glass wall of a gigantic fly-trap.

III

REAR GUARD

III

REAR GUARD

IT was the little tailor of the first squad, the "vaudeville man" as he was known on account of his curved nose and his bandy legs, whose suspicions were aroused first. At noon he had been commanded to help a wounded man to the nearest hospital station. He did not come back until night because the station had vanished and he had had to entrust his utterly exhausted comrade to an ammunition truck. More than that he would not say, so long as a crowd of the curious surrounded him. But when, several minutes later, he met Gadsby in the communication trench, he first looked around rapidly and then, wildly gesticulating, attacked him with a flood of alarming news.

Where had the hospital station gone to? Why had it been withdrawn further to the rear? Why were all the roads full of columns of men marching rearward, while only an isolated motorcyclist whirled toward the front now and then? And why, above all, was the park of the château yonder deserted as a graveyard at midnight, when usually it swarmed with officers and their ordinances? Why was that, he wanted to know?

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Wasn't it evident that the thin chain of outposts that still occupied the front trenches had been calmly dedicated to the ravens? "Rear guard, I tell you, that's what we are. We're like the remnants a man leaves on his shelves for the creditors after a dishonest failure. You'll see that I'm right. This time to-morrow we'll be done for! Our respite ends when the fog lifts. When the curtain goes up our little performance will be over. Mark my words!"

The thin, hollow-cheeked Jew with his cunning face and his frightened, intelligent eyes had said all this as if it were a lesson he had learned. In his zeal of communication he had backed Gadsky to a corner of the trench. His thin arms fluttered like the wings of a bat. It looked from afar as if he wanted to attack Gadsky. The latter's smile of superior incredulity increased his desperation. He found more and more proofs for his contention and finally released his victim with a sharp: "Very well. You'll see!"

Gadsky had at first dismissed the lurid story with a shrug. He liked the queer little man well. He thought it quite comprehensible that a timid man who had plied the yard-stick all his life should lose his judgment in this atmosphere of danger and death. It was not until later when, in spite of the falling dark, the service of supply men 'did not appear with supper and the command was given to break into the iron ration, that the tailor's prophecies came back into his mind. His superior smile faded into a mere un-

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willing glint of teeth when the "vaudeville man" slipped by him, drenched with misery and said: "Well, what did I tell you?"

He tried to shake off his discomfort in the dugout where some one's birthday was being celebrated and even notorious misers contributed their share. But the merriment and the jests grew intolerable to him. He fled from all that and also from the deep sighs and the melancholy nods of the tailor who stood against the wall like an animated message of doom. He returned to the trench and in a corner summoned all his will power to master his ridiculous nervousness. He was not going to let that shaking, little coward with his silly chatter influence his mood.

But now the cinematograph in his mind had been set in motion and his throbbing pulses drove armies of mad images through it. He saw all phases of a desperate hand-to-hand encounter. He saw himself captured; saw himself wounded and above him the white-eyed Algerian negro troops warming their cold fingers in his blood. The stories that he had affected to despise became terribly concrete now and his reason was powerless against his flogged senses.

It was his particular misfortune to be on sentry duty that night, just at midnight. And in the foremost piece of trench, between friend and foe, isolated in the impenetrable darkness, he succumbed utterly to his fevered imagination.

The rain fell quite softly, sickened with a monotonous whisper into the upturned earth, and

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dripped on his helmet with a maddening regularity that tugged at his nerves. There was about him an uninterrupted concert of equivocal noises which always forced him to listen tensely, until every murmuring and thumping and rattling caused the shadows of imminent danger to arise before him. The fog did its share. Over every suspicious shadow it threw a veil and a second later fluttered its gray streamers from the posts of the wire entanglements, as though it were signaling to the enemy beyond. In vain did Gadsby seek to liberate his mind from these shadowy goings on. The loose streamers sank down, became gray masses that rolled forward up to his loop-hole, so that at moments his blood threatened to congeal. His own breath coming from above penetrated into the trench and, with his convulsive fingers on the trigger, he would seem to see again and again the gleaming of a strange eye in front of his . . .

The illuminated dial on his wrist-watch showed that it was half past twelve. Only half of this dreadful night was over. Suddenly the fog, caught by a gust of wind, lifted and showed the piece of No Man's Land before him like an empty stage. The emergence of the well-known posts and hillocks served to quiet his nerves. The hammering in his temples ceased and he looked about him like one who after a long climb has sight of a familiar valley. In many hours of loneliness and danger, pressed close against the breastworks, he had impressed upon his mind

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every foot of ground, every inch of wire. He knew this bit of earth by heart as he had known some piece of music he was going to play publicly. He could close his eyes and see every detail—every white bit of stone, every rag of a uniform; he had accustomed himself to this God forsaken spot as one accustoms oneself to some loved implement or the view of one's neighbor's garden from a study window. He knew he would be more unhappy if he were ordered to some other point of the system of trenches and smiled sadly at the humility of heart which attached its instinct for home to pieces of cadaver and to shell holes.

With a smoother forehead he now sent his glances over the familiar points and gazed, at last, at the small, black island which lay like a puddle between the tall posts of the wire-entanglements. It was "the Frenchman," a poor devil who, when these trenches had been taken by the Germans, had been singled out from his fleeing comrades by a last, stupid bullet and had been hurled into the wires of the French entanglement. For a long time he had swung there like a tight-rope walker, bent over backwards in the shape of a horseshoe and swinging lightly up and down whenever a projectile had landed near him. A well aimed shell had finally liberated him from the wires between heaven and earth and for a long time now he had been lying on the ground, losing his clothes, putrifying away, and even his mere skeleton existence was

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fast coming to an end. At night he now seemed merely a little heap of earth. By day it had the appearance, at a distance, as though he were cut in half, with the greater part of his body under the surface of the earth. Whoever saw him for the first time thought that he lay in a hollow. Really the ground under him was as level as a table. One more change of sentries and he would cease to be useful as a point of orientation and the orders and announcements that had long contained such stereotyped phrases as: "To the right of the Frenchman," would have to change their wording.

So many weeks had passed since poor Weiler was gone! . . . Gadsby measured the tiny elevation, which was all that remained of what had once been a man's body, and counted up the weeks since Weiler's departure, the weeks which he had passed in the outmost trench. It was strange how in the present each hour seemed to be an eternity, yet in memory the experiences of this life seemed to pass in such close succession as though the terrible intervals of inactivity and dull misery had never been, or as if they had vanished like the tide which also leaves as visible witnesses only the wrecks which it has washed ashore. Nothing, absolutely nothing, had happened since that storm attack on the French position, since that frightful slaughter which Weiler, driven on by his captain, had had to share, reeling and with half-maddened eyes. And then, a few hours later, the sentinels had brought

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him back—a madman, shaken by horror as though the dead Frenchman was at his heels.

Gadsky had a vivid memory of every word that his friend had spoken, and also of his cruelly distorted face. They had lashed him to a stretcher and kept him there until he could be carried to the rear under cover of darkness. Even now, after so many weeks, it was unendurably hard to think of the transformation of this tender and sad and lovely soul into a raving maniac whose long howls could be heard many minutes after the stretcher-bearers had gone with him. He had broken down under the too heavy burden of his fate and what they carried away was only the ruins of his being—only an exanimate body alive merely because the blood coursed through its veins. Even the preparations for the attack had exceeded his strength. Then came the fearful storming forward and the unspeakable barbarism of a hand-to-hand encounter. Finally, before his nerves had had a chance to recover, he had been ordered on sentinel duty only a few feet away from the body that hung in the wires like a caught insect, and, for all that any one knew, might still have been quivering and twitching with life . . .

“Courage is a lack of imagination,” Weiler had once declared. And in truth, to his feverishly active imagination, to his morbidly exquisite sensibility which felt the pains of others within its own innermost being, this sight had been far more insufferable than it would have

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been to some blunt fellow whose inner vision did not exceed his physical sight . . . And many other sayings of his which they had smiled at once upon a time had proven themselves to be deeply true. How queer, for instance, he had once thought another assertion of Weiler's, namely, that no one's imagination is capable of envisaging his own death, that the calmness with which men spoke of their own extinction was sheer hypocrisy, because in the back of his mind each one held fast to the conviction that he himself would not die and mentioned the possibility of it only out of tactfulness toward others. Foolish as that had once seemed, and much as he had mocked at it, he was bound to confess now that the observation was true. In moments of the highest danger, before that great attack, for instance, a similar feeling had involuntarily arisen in him. He, too, could not imagine the dawn arising upon a dead George Gadsby who might be, like that poor Frenchman, only a little heap of decay.

But suppose to-morrow morning . . . ? Suppose the little tailor was right!

He drew himself up and looked at his watch again. Was this hour never going to end? The sweat gathered on his forehead; he pushed his trench-helmet far back and held his face into the cooling wind which was just gathering force and tearing the fog as with angry fingers. The rain flowed from the rim of his helmet down his back; he didn't notice it. His eyes were again fastened

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on the dead Frenchman who seemed to play hide and seek with him, drawing up the fog about him like a sheet and peering forth again. For him, at least, the ultimate agony was over! Had he been young, Gadsby wondered, when the last bullet hit him? Probably. They had all been very youthful and had worn gallant little mustaches. He remembered one in especial . . . But no! He forced himself not to think. For it had been murder, murder—all the generals and all the cunning men of the whole world notwithstanding. And involuntarily he held his gun in a slacker grasp as though his fingers were nauseated at the touch of each other.

That poor fellow in front there was, he thanked God, on some one else's conscience. The sergeant of the second squad was probably the sender of that final bullet. And now he lay there, on this sick earth, which the projectiles of both armies had tormented and disfigured and sown with scars. And while he putrefied here into an unspeakable liquid, there was somewhere probably a fragrant, exquisite little wife who was still excited at each coming of the postman and reverently kept his place on the broad French marriage bed. . . .

Gadsby closed his eyes for a moment. From afar there seemed to come to him the fragrance of all tender memories, the infinitely pathetic beauty of life, as though from that imagined bed a perfume had floated to him as to a friend.

Wasn't it enough to drive one mad? To await

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one's end now at the very height of one's vital powers? To be shot or stabbed like a mad dog in the middle of the road? Was he not filled to the brim with hope and strength and high possibilities? And he was asked to give up, perhaps, thirty noble years of love and art and all the glories of the earth!

Why?

And suddenly Weiler appeared before him again—Weiler whom the whole battalion had regretted with tears in their eyes. Now he lay in a white bed behind a wall of glass that protected him from wind and rain, and to-morrow he would see the sun arise over the roofs of the city and to-morrow night he would see the sun set again. Mad or not—he was alive. And would go on living. He would see the loveliness of women and perhaps hear the singing of his blood again some day. And next he seemed to see at his side the wounded man whom the tailor had conducted to the rear to-day. He saw him walk in a blossoming hospital garden and look through the lilac bushes toward the street and hear the rattle of the trams. And he saw women in bright summer dresses look into the garden at the heroes there. That same man who this morning had stood here pale and gnashing his teeth . . .

The man who would else, here with the others, have . . .

And why?

Because a stupid piece of iron had fallen some

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paces nearer to the right than was expected and had torn into that man's flesh his permit to go back into life . . . No, that wasn't possible! That was . . . The devil take these ghosts! George Gadsby, the darling of destiny, was in danger of imitating the shabby little schoolmaster Fröbel. Had he not volunteered? And now he grieved like any philistine who knows no difference between living and breathing. One should, indeed, be sorry for Fröbel. He had nothing but misfortune before the eyes of his mind, trembled for his life constantly, and had no trust in his star. But he, George Gadsby, was sinning against his destiny, challenging the gods with his lack of faith . . .

He clenched his fist and determined to pass the fifteen minutes which must elapse before he would be relieved in brighter thoughts and not to be overcome by the shadows again. If only it had not been for the fog. It lay before one's eyes and on one's chest and rolled heavy, stone gray balls on the cratered field, covering everything that might distract one's thoughts. It was difficult, thus isolated, not to fall into brooding and to suck oneself full of misery. A vigorous enemy fire was easier to bear; at least it kept the senses awake and the muscles taut. When the shells came whistling along and, after each explosion, one's life seemed to blossom anew because one lived, when one might so easily have been dead—in the midst of that sharp struggle and gamble for existence one had, at least, no chance to

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reflect. And above it all hovered the prospect of some days in the rear positions, and even an hour in the dugout, when measured by the whistling breath of the grenades, seemed to promise an eternity of shelter. And this tension was repeated from minute to minute; it filled ten thousand with a consuming ache for life; it flamed up intolerably when a projectile curved in the empty sky; it smoldered behind the front in the daily hope for the miracle of peace before a new march to the firing-line.

Gadsky's heart grew warm when he thought of this storm of fevered pulses, of this gigantic hope that held millions breathless.

It was as though the great clock of life were hung visibly before men's faces. They were all united in their vigil. Those in front clung to the second hand whose movements were marked by the soaring explosions of death; those behind them counted the hours, and far behind these surged the sea of those whom every day brought nearer to the great peril. From each of a million hearts came this great stream of hope; it rose to an incredible breadth and depth and beat against the thresholds of those mighty ones who were lords of so much life in dread.

And did those mighty ones remain quite calm? . . . Did they not see that the great stream was rising to their feet, to their hearts? . . . Was it possible?

He listened. The wind wailed in the telegraph wires; the streamers of the fog were like widow's

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weeds; and out of the flood of beseeching faces that assailed him there arose the careworn face of his sister. She was guarding her only child, a boy of seventeen. She had been as glad to see her brother go as if she felt it was giving the child a longer respite. Oh, how full of dread were the mothers . . . the mothers . . . Many who at the beginning of the war had blessed the youth of their sons grasped the paper to-day in that same wild and despairing hope and cursed the vigor of their growing lads. A voice in them called louder and louder for peace; their hearts clung ever more desperately to this one hope—until at last the fatal hour came and a child went from them and soon returned with the pride of youth still in its eyes but in its hand the terrible implement that is lord of life and death. And while the son grew harder and more estranged from day to day and was taught the trade of murder, of shooting and of stabbing other mothers' sons who were far away and who were learning to do the same—while all this happened, the poor mother held to her wild heart the long weeks of training and cried, cried, cried for peace! How could the masters fail to hear? The great cry went up from wherever boys were growing to manhood, from the hospitals where wounds healed so terribly soon, from barracks where bearded men knelt in their beds like little children, from all the ends of the tormented earth arose that cry. . . . Were the masters deaf?

Gadsky recalled the everlasting questions and

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arguments of Fröbel in the barracks; the man's rigid belief that the war would end before their battalion was summoned to the front. A mad, dull rage arose in him at the thought that this same hope was still keeping weary men from sleep on their military cots, while the dreadful wheel was still turning. . . . How long would the millions still be pushed nearer the abyss with each turn of the wheel, and sink over the edge in great crowds only because the masters of this pitiless mechanism held peace in their closed hands and would not, would not open them!

He bit his teeth together. He could hardly restrain the great hatred that arose within him. The dark feeling that he had had this precise mental experience before in life arose to trouble him. He turned over memory after memory until suddenly the vision he was seeking stood before him, to the minutest details in the glare of a strange sun. It had happened during his great tour through the United States. How long ago was that? Five years? No, it was only four! And yet it seemed to beckon to him as from a blessed and infinitely far past—a millennium of rugs and bath-tubs half incredible to the poor cave-dweller of to-day, that servant of servants who scarcely dared recognize his identity with the George Gadsby who had once had a dream that was so like reality of glittering concert-halls and of people stretching out their arms after him as after the stars. . . .

In those far days he had had the experience

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that he now recalled. It had been on a brilliant spring morning in Chicago. From his great house, guarded like a sanctuary by exotic trees, his host, a fat little Yankee with thick fingers and a double chin for whose business thirteen hundred sheep were slaughtered daily, and who, nevertheless, was capable of a moisture in his eyes at a Beethoven sonata—this man had driven him over to his kingdom. The extensive factory buildings appeared before Gadsby's mind clearly. He saw again the workers' cottages, the long, flat store-houses, and beyond the endless expanse of the prairie which seemed to be filled to the very horizon with the victims of the coming slaughter. And it seemed to him that he could still smell the sour odor of congealed blood and, exactly as on that day, a nausea threatened to choke him, a nausea which had increased at the sight of the blood-spattered men who, with the regularity of machines, dipped their glittering knives into the living animals which were propelled toward them and then swung away by the same mechanism and, while they were still quivering, into another place to be disemboweled and cut limb from limb. There, in that great hall that was filled with the acrid stench of blood he had had his first vision of the grinning gargoyle of fate . . .

Then a siren had blown its cleaving whistle. The roar of the wheels had stopped, the speeding machinery slowed down, the hangmen laid aside their knives and slipped out of their bloody

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aprons, and the troop of victims was driven back to its stalls—back to life. And even to-day, in the midst of war, himself a murderer, beside him the slim knife with which his hands had extinguished the life of the little Frenchman—even to-day, he could feel again his triumphant joy and the solidarity he felt with the animals who had been saved, whom another respite from death had been given. And with a shudder he thought of the last sheep killed, the little beast for whom the whistle had sounded just too late.

Sheep! Stupid, bleating, voracious animals! And he had been so full of compassion for the one that had had to give up its little life just because the steam had entered the siren a moment too late!

Was there no one who had compassion upon men? Was there no signal that would put an end to this slaughter?

Wrapped in the fog which grew thicker from moment to moment Gadsby gave himself up to the remembered indignation that had filled him when his fat little Mæcenus had explained to him the part assigned to the bell-wether who, day by day, led his unsuspecting brothers down to the slaughter-house. He still saw before him the great, overfed beast who was stubborn and had to be driven back with sticks because he was accustomed to retire to the stables alone, in order to return later, proudly prancing, at the head of new victims. He could still hear the meat king's condescending laughter over his artistic

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sensitiveness, and his fingers grasped his rifle convulsively as if he could even now aim at that repulsive beast which was pampered and honored and which, as arrogant as though aware of its importance, passed its magnificent life at the expense of whole herds of its brothers whom it led daily to the killing-pens.

How right that musical murderer of sheep had been to laugh at him. What did it matter that the blood of those animals was shed? One ate their flesh with pleasure and never thought of how it was obtained. How devoid of significance the whole process had been! How absurd his shudder seemed!

For here precisely the same machinery was in action and it had been erected so as to cover kingdoms and republics of men and the blood that dripped from the wheels was the blood of men. Here, too, everything had been well thought out; here, too, illustrious guests were invited to visit the organization of the factory; here, too, there was no escaping from the steel nets and iron arms that dragged children from their parents. And first they were also put into the stalls to be washed and shorn and prepared, and on great meadows they were made ready for the killing. There was no stopping the relentless machinery which knew no holiday and no uncertainty until it had delivered its victims to the killing-pens of the firing-line. And here too, the material came inexhaustibly from the depots while millions of eyes and ears and foreheads,

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damp with bloody sweat, listened for the voice of the siren—millions who, in their convulsed souls, clung to the single hope that the siren would whistle and the wheels stop before their bodies were swung to the place of knives and blood. . . .

And there were men in the world, men of flesh and blood themselves, with eyes that could see and ears that could hear. And these men had the power of letting the steam pass into the siren and give the signal—and did not do so. There were men who felt the looks of this world full of agony fixed on their faces and who had their hands on the lever that guided the machinery—and they exerted no pressure, made no sign. He could not help repeating this thought, for it seemed to him the most monstrous and incredible thought in the world. Yes, there were men who could give life to millions, could save those already quivering on the edge of the abyss, could work this unspeakable miracle and refrained. They were, on the contrary, quite calm, and kept their eyes fixed on some quite distant goal which they themselves did not clearly see or understand and said: "Until that goal is reached the men at the front must carry on." It was incredible. They sat where they could control the wheels that rolled over blood and bones, and ate and drank and slept—oh, yes, they actually slept, while the machinery roared on and hundreds of thousands who had hoped to the last

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moment, bared their necks to the gleaming knives.

How was that possible?

A painful feeling of being utterly deserted and alone had come over him. He seemed to see himself standing there in the fog, abandoned by the world and even by himself, and by all who knew him, sinking in a shoreless swamp from which salvation was impossible. He thrust his hand into his mouth, so ungovernably strong had grown his desire to cry out—loud, loud, as loud as he could—that he wanted to live, to live!

Did he amount to nothing any longer? Was he of no more value to the world than the first tailor's apprentice that one might meet? How had they once pressed his hands, and sunned themselves in the reflection of his fame and turned the eyes in their heads over the unforgettable delights that he had given them! Where were they now? Oh, at staff headquarters or within their accustomed places at home. And they were very careful not to breathe a word. For it was safest, if one had gotten off so far, to be very still, to say no word. There was always the danger of being drafted and of sitting no longer at one's table, but of joining the others in their dance of death. Who was going to risk the exchange? You couldn't help those at the front anyhow.

An inexpressible disgust shook him when he thought of that cowardly crowd who pursued their business, quite satisfied that they had

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saved themselves from the great flood. He saw those gentlemen whose lives he had made beautiful with his art and who had pressed his hands when they heard that he had volunteered for the service. They talked with self-satisfaction of "carrying on" and continued to command their employees and thought it quite right that other men should sink back into slavery. How indifferently they envisaged the monstrous fact that their own lives continued in the accustomed way, while others went where first their souls were stamped out of their bodies and then those bodies were mangled and mutilated before death gave them rest. And if any one were to dare to shake them up and complain of the utter horrors that others had to endure—they would forbid such annoyances and shut their ears. For they, too, were human, and dared not have the reality brought home to them. It was better to say and to believe that each bore his share of the great burden. It was the part of the "brave boys at the front" to be butchered without making a disagreeable noise. After all, it was no one's fault.

Once only he would have liked to hurl his contempt into the face of those who had accepted the war like any other change in the world, and those who were even profiting by it! Hard as were the things he had had to endure, bitter as others might still be, he knew that he would not exchange places with those men. Nor would he have exchanged places with some of his im-

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mediate colleagues. If he had to choose again, he would still choose to die here rather than stay at home and give charity concerts for widows and orphans behind a wall of lies!

He, at least, had the right to look the war face to face, to despise and hate it from the depths of his heart. He did not have to play the hypocrite and declaim the contrary of what he really thought, like those who called a murderer blessed simply because he had passed their own throats by. He served the war, thank God, by giving himself up to it, not by withdrawing himself from it. He at least was perishing because he had let a false radiance mislead him. No one could accuse him of praising the great murder at a safe distance and of securing himself by an acquiescence from afar.

Proudly he raised his head—and then suddenly started and uttered a little cry as some one tapped his shoulder softly from behind.

It was the sentry who had come to relieve him and whom he had almost forgotten. Without looking at the man he stepped back silently and slowly followed the corporal on duty. The wind blew behind them and pressed his sodden shirt like a cold bandage against his neck, so that his teeth chattered with the chill. Angrily he pushed his helmet forward again to prevent the water from trickling down his back and murmured, half to himself, half to his companion, a curse against the weather.

Immediately the corporal stood stock-still as

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though Gadsby's words had sprung a strange trap. "For God's sake, don't worry about the weather," he said hoarsely and his eyes gleamed strangely in the darkness. "When the fog lifts, it'll take us all along to heaven!"

Gadsby felt his breath give out. What did that mean? Had further orders come in while he was on sentry duty? More exact orders? Or did this man merely repeat the empty croakings of the little tailor? He was just about to ask a definite question when the corporal stepped aside and there arose behind him the tall slender silhouette of Ensign von Krülow. As in a dream, and as though a thick wall separated him from those two, he heard Krülow utter a few brief words, heard the corporal's respectful answer and the thump of the latter's boots on the wet clay. Not until the sounds of the steps had died away and he felt the hot hand of the ensign grasp his, did he awaken and draw a long breath. Without a word having been uttered, from the silence itself, he felt the icy certainty flow into his mind, as though the great peril itself breathed its cold breath upon his face. He opened his mouth. He meant to ask a question; he tried to pierce the darkness and see the features of Krülow. But he remained silent. Only the throbbing of his own pulses sounded in the stillness, and when Krülow released his hand he felt as though a last means of salvation had been forevermore withdrawn from him.

Krülow was silent, too. Without stirring,

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they stood facing each other for a little while, listening to each other's souls and staring at the blackness of the trench wall.

"It's all over," Gadsby thought. And then every fiber of his being rebelled against the hopelessness of these words. There was no such thing. Had not people held out for days in mid-ocean clinging to a plank? Had they not been buried fathoms deep in earth and been rescued after all? He pulled himself together for a new attack upon despair. Then the nervous hand of the ensign touched his arm and from the soft voice that he heard there arose a sadness so weary and complete that all strength left him again.

"I was just going to ask you to use your influence over Fröbel," he heard Krülow say. Involuntarily he made a gesture of denial, deeply wounded by this demand which, passing his own need by, seemed to fix its attention on another's. By what right was so much more demanded of him than of others? Why should he take up a stranger's burden at this hour? A burning feeling of utter outrage arose in him. He meant to say at last that he felt no inner call at all toward laying down his life with any especial elegance of gesture, or more carelessly than any other man. He wanted to say that shamelessly and to say it to just this kindly lad whose heart was so open to all appeals. He wanted to show him the abyss between the wretched lives of these **others** and the magic wealth of his own.

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But Krülow didn't let him speak. He had not been able to see the hurt and outraged look in Gadsby's face and he took the gesture and the shake of the head to be merely an attempt modestly to deny any influence over Fröbel.

"Oh, yes, you can. You have more influence over him than the captain," he whispered and spoke on insistently, almost beseechingly, holding out his hand for a last clasp in case any one should appear.

"The captain is beginning to have his suspicions. I've done all I could to reassure him. But whenever we talk about Fröbel he says: 'I shouldn't have advanced that fellow. He seems to be a damned coward.' Fröbel has got to pull himself together. The captain just told us that everything now depends on keeping up the discipline. He's quite ready to make an example of any one in order to stiffen the morale of the others. Tell Fröbel that the minute you see him. He's an awfully good fellow and, of course, you can't turn a kindly sheep into a tiger—as our dear Weiler used to say. But he ought to restrain himself at least in the captain's presence. He's got time enough to let his head hang if things really get bad. We're far from the worst now. The fog may stay another whole day. Or the enemy may not catch on until the withdrawal is complete. We need hold out only twelve hours more. Then we have permission to evacuate this trench. Tell him that, if he'll keep a stiff upper lip, I'll get him a week's leave as a

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reward. And also—tell him that I've got a brother over in Corsica. He was made prisoner in just such a situation as this. His whole squadron was cut up. But he got a bullet in his lung at the very start and simply slept through the whole affair. When he came to, a French surgeon was standing at his bedside. Fact! My brother wrote us all about it. Tell Fröbel that story to encourage him. I'd be sorry to see him disgraced. You can see him sitting in the dug-out. He's like a horrible example! If the captain catches him that way—there will be trouble. Impress that on him. He believes so in you."

He had said all that in feverish haste, glancing to the right and the left. Just as he had finished a sentinel appeared in the communication trench. He called out in a forced voice: "You have understood, haven't you?" Then he saluted and disappeared.

Gadsky stared after him. He had scarcely heard the second part of his friend's discourse. Only the phrases: "We need hold out only twelve hours more . . ." and: "The enemy may not catch on . . ." had hooked themselves firmly into his brain and came back again and again as though a wheezy gramophone played the same record without end.

So it was true. Irrevocably true. Not merely a suspicion or the gossip of the trenches. He had heard it from an officer who had probably read the orders with his own eyes. . . . Twelve hours more. That meant that the enemy had to be held

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here till evening. At any cost. The order probably read: "To the last man!" Oh, yes, that was the customary formula.

"To the last man!" It was easily said. It gave you a pleasant shiver. Warlike sentences like that were all the rage now. "To the last man!" or "To the last breath of man and beast!" You could rattle with such phrases and with their implied heroism and virility just as you proudly rattled gold coins in your pocket. At the beginning, when this whole monstrous thing had first, as with one stride, stepped out of the history books and the historical dramas into the realities of every-day life and grandiose phrases had taken the place of common speech, in those early days, he was bound to confess, those phrases had given him too a reverent shiver, a prickling sensation made up of curiosity and vanity. . . . Tonight he was forced to think, as he did so many times, of Weiler. All of the latter's prophecies seemed gradually to come true. Now at last it became clear how little one had, after all, reckoned with the possibility of death. It had seemed something incredibly remote. What had seemed real was a mixture of iron crosses and heroic gestures and a triumphant return home. Now the one shadow amid all this splendor had become the sole inexorable reality. The weight of a complete hopelessness was upon him. Five days in the very front trench under the incredible hammering of drum-fire still gave one a chance. One could fix one's eyes on that chance and overlook

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the horrors. But such combats as those that were ahead now meant the end. If they repulsed one attack, it only meant a brief pause, a prolongation of their torment. And behind all that there was nothing, emptiness, at most a few frosty sentences: "Ah, Gadsby, too! Well! well! I must say I am sorry."

His arms hung down as if filled with lead. His knees felt hollow. A weariness as after a ten hours' march weighed down his limbs, tore the rifle from his hand, forced him to sit down on an empty munition box. Behind him raged the wind, rose to a stormy violence, and flapped his icy shirt again and again against his glowing body. He smiled bitterly as he thought that he needn't fear taking cold, not even developing pneumonia. It no longer mattered. He didn't care in what state of health the fatal day might find him. Germs that settled in him to-day were not destined to a long or a merry life.

There was an advantage in everything, he told himself ironically and fought desperately against the gentler emotions which Krülow's superhuman forgetfulness of self had called forth within him. The boy wasn't twenty. He came from a social caste that looked down on primary school teachers as from a tower. And yet in this hour fated to end his scarcely opened life, he had taken thought of that humble man who was fifteen years his senior. Why must such radiant goodness perish before it had a chance to scatter its limitless treasures into a thousand

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empty hearts and minds? And others who meant nothing to any one but themselves were saved from danger by a happy chance. Was one not almost driven to believe that an evil chance ruled the affairs of men, when one saw the destruction of the kind and noble and the careful preservation of the cold, the narrow and the malicious? This little Ensign von Krülow had two brothers. And he loved life so touchingly and was here. Those two were arrogant, stupidly proud of their name, tramped like blind beasts through that world which he won for himself through the great love in his soul. And one of those two, the elder, had a comfortable berth in Berlin at the great headquarters of the General Staff; the other was safe and sound now in Corsica. Could not these two dry souls who heard no sigh of man, no cry for help, could not they have paid the toll of blood instead of the youngest in whose hands every penny of the great family fortune would have been a seed of mercy to men?

Holding his head between his hands Gadsky still stared at the tracks which Krülow's feet had left. These were slowly filling with water. And he tried to think of Krülow. For in the light of his friend's thoughts he was ashamed of his own. Did not the two hundred men who had lived by his side for months until they had all become links of the same chain—did they not also approach destruction? Yet in that night his thoughts had not touched upon their woe.

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His indignation against those who were safe and far away had been quite free of any sympathy for these others. He had thought of no one, he told himself bitterly, not even of his friends, not even of Fröbel, not even of Krülow who was so much younger than himself and who had yet cast scarcely a glance into the great banqueting hall of life which had been for him the scene of not a few triumphs.

His drenched shirt tormented him every moment and clung to his back at every motion he made. His whole body shivered and trembled, but he was determined to stay here. He wanted, morbidly, to taste the whole bitterness of his humiliation, his physical wretchedness and deep discomfort. With shame, with a hatred of himself, he thought of the days when he had driven through life in his dry dancing-shoes and had taken no thought of the poor devil on the box—separated from him by only a pane of glass—whose back was soggy with the rain water and whose clothes flapped in the cold wind. Dared a man who had lived thus be indignant against the cruel compulsion that held him here?

And now, as through a veil there came an image to him, a memory that he did not want to face. But in defiance and pride he forced himself to do so. Inexorable to himself, he spurred his memory on to reconstruct that scene. And he felt a cold grip upon his heart when he calculated that to the very day two years had passed since that night—since his last concert in Paris! Who

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would have thought that it was to be his last? There was a storm of spring just as now and shook the hansom cab. Mathilde was sitting beside him in it and her eyes gleamed into his. He had surpassed himself on that evening so that he had been dragged back to the piano again and again. He was now tasting the full savor of success in the pressure of her fingers and the glow of her cheeks. He had indeed played for her alone. From the far corner of the hall where she had had her seat, power and tenderness had streamed into his hands.

And then? Ah, he lived through that scene again as vividly as though it were being reenacted before him on an invisible stage. He saw again the white-haired old cabby, blowing and wheezing in the storm that swept across the street and made his cab shake. Of course, he had had no desire to palaver with the cabby. He wanted to get to Neuilly, to the exquisite little cottage where the very chairs and hangings were impregnated with the subtle perfumes of Mathilde's body. There supper was awaiting them; there he wanted to take her in his arms and feel his triumph as an artist in the kisses of her love. Was it surprising that he had spoken briefly and gruffly to the old man, and had utterly lost all patience when the rain dashed over the apron of the hansom and turned Mathilde's frock of pale green *crêpe de Chine* into a moist rag that clung to her slender limbs?

"Mais M'sieur! Par c' temps!" the old man

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had pleaded. And his answer had been merely a harsh: "En avant!"

Ah, that was precisely what those mighty ones were saying who conducted this retreat: "En avant!" They too, desired with an equal fervor the success that would bring them fame and decorations and the arms of love. "En avant!"—the words were also echoed by the pack that pursued money in all countries—war-profits through steel and explosives—the money that should have bled as from a thousand wounds, but that meant to them pale green frocks of *crêpe de Chine* and lovely cottages as homes of love. That same master feeling that made him tense as a bow each time that he ascended the concert platform and made a willing tool of his soul and his body with which to rule the hundred-headed beast below him, that same intoxication and rage for success was now storming through the General Staff offices and burning in the hearts of the men who wanted their success and their rewards and their victory, no matter what became of cab or cabby, of George Gadsby or of an hundred thousand others!

He seemed to sink back into himself; an uncanny gaping emptiness surrounded him. He felt unmasked and could not escape from the net that he himself had woven. For it was just as he had told himself. There was no evasion. The monstrous injustice which he had cursed that night in the outer trench, when it was rightly and objectively looked upon, was nothing more

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than a mere change of social station. George Gadsby had been expelled from that happy circle which was upborne and had fallen to the level of the bearers of burdens. In peace he had been, as it were, a member of the General Staff; to-night he sat on the box of a cab exposed to the streaming rain and drove others toward their success and their joys.

He saw clearly enough that there was, as an ethical question, a way out for him, an excuse he could offer for himself. But he disdained it. The son of a humble man who had gone forth into the world after success, insatiable after radiance and triumph and love, could not worthily make the excuse now that he, at least, had not sacrificed the lives of men to his greatness. Because there were the poor fellows who had paid for his success with infinite disappointments, who had dragged on a wretched life as piano-teachers and who had sat with hungry eyes in the crowded halls at his concerts. For those halls, when they had rented them with their last pennies for which they had starved and suffered, always remained empty. Was there a general who had spoken more contemptuously, more pitilessly, of the soldiers who gave their lives for his success than he had done of these "piano-threshers" and all the tribe of "bloody amateurs"? No, this conflict with bayonets and grenades was not much more cruel than that competition which stamped on souls and then raced on without asking how those victims of fate managed to carry on their

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broken lives. And he himself, had the choice been offered him of begging his way through life as a man of unrecognized talent, embittered and pitied, or of succumbing, freed of all that agony, on this bloody field, would have hesitated not a moment to accept the latter fate.

Suddenly he grasped his rifle more sturdily and jumped up. A new strength, a wild and stubborn determination had taken hold of him. With great, firm strides he went toward the dug-out. He was too tired to untangle the coil of these monstrous happenings here in the windy trench with death before his eyes. He could not get to the bottom of it all now. But he felt clearly that he had his share in the world-wide guilt. He knew that the hurricane that had uprooted him and hurled him hither, had not arisen suddenly and without cause, but had slowly emerged from the regardless greed for life that had once mastered him too. And the mad rage which impelled these nations to fly at each other's throats and to wade through blood and tears, was only that same million-voiced cry in each of them after wealth and power and ease at the expense of others; it was the same blind selfishness that had stung him too to follow, without thought or ruth, at the heels of success.

He hastened back to get some sleep before morning. He wanted to enter that fight strong and rested. Now that he recognized that he was not a guiltless sacrifice at the mercy of an external catastrophe, but a fighter in a combat

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which he—like every friend and every foe—had helped to summon upon earth, he was determined to defend himself to the last breath. Let them beware who would rob him of his life! Whoever had shown himself as sturdy in the battle of life as he, need not lose all courage because the fight was to be fought to-day with other weapons, with actual blow and thrust. He would defend himself. Yes, he would, by God. What glory, what unimaginable blessedness would there not be for him if he could fight his way back once more into his real life. For he would now be able to value it a thousand times more after this bitter trial! Then—only then could he hope to make up for the shortcomings of his old avidity and selfishness. He could become a giver, one who does not walk ruthlessly over the weak, but shares his happiness, and, like Krülow, builds himself a house of joy out of the joy he gives away. But to do that he needed to live—he needed to preserve himself. Only if his body, like that of the Frenchman yonder, slowly blended with the earth—only in that case was the present result of his life a final one.

So he would fight!

But when he entered the dugout, he seemed to receive a sudden blow. With its mighty grasp the disconsolate sight that met him tore the security he had battled for from his soul. What a change! He had left merry faces here and clinking glasses. And now he found shrunken figures and staring eyes. The room seemed to

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exhale horror. They crouched there as though the bony hand of death were already at each man's throat. With the cold smoke that floated above them was blended the acrid odor of the sweat of terror that poured from the men's bodies as the inevitable hour of death drew near.

Shuddering, Gadsby leaned against the entrance, when some one grasped his arm and drew him along. "Please, please, come on out!" Fröbel's voice hissed into his ear. He wanted to relieve himself of the weight of his rifle, but the shaking fingers clasped his wrist convulsively, and the hoarse voice pleaded wildly: "Take it along! Please take it along!"

Annoyed and frowning, Gadsby permitted himself to be drawn out into the trench and followed the man's breathless pace far back, beyond the third turning of the trench, to a niche that had once been filled with sandbags and had then been a sort of first bandaging station. "Where the devil are you dragging me to?" he cried indignantly and shrugged his shoulders contemptuously as Fröbel laid a warning finger on his lips.

He stopped in the niche and before Gadsby could prevent it Fröbel had thrown himself on his knees before him and was stretching out his folded hands toward him. "Save me! For God's sake, save me! Think of my wife and my child! For God's sake!"

Gadsby felt a bitter taste come into his mouth; a physical nausea arose in him at the man. He

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could have struck him in his disgust. "Get up!" he said. "How can you kneel?"—And when the dark body at his feet seemed to sink into the very mud and the arms embraced his hips and he heard sobs, he repeated angrily: "Do get up! How can you?"

Fröbel remained where he was. "Help me!" he whined. "I've tried everything! I can't do it!" He released Gadsby and buried his face in his hands and wept softly. Then his terror shook him again, he clung to Gadsby's coat and cried out: "Help me! Please help me!"

Gadsby shoved him aside and said gruffly, "For heaven's sake, get up! How could I help you? We're in the same boat. . . ."

Fröbel jumped up as if he had been stung. He came so near that his lips almost touched Gadsby's ear and whispered: "You can, you can help me. You can save me if you want to! It isn't too yet. If I start soon I can reach the rear lines. . . . Help me. . . ."

Gadsby stared at him uncomprehendingly and stepped back a pace, since the other had grasped his rifle and almost tore it from his hand. "What are you doing? Take care! It's loaded."

Fröbel's teeth chattered like a man's in a high, cold fever. "You reported to me yesterday that . . . that your rifle is defective. . . . Do just touch the trigger. . . . I'll pretend I was examining it. . . ."

Gadsby hurled him afar. "Are you mad? Do you want us both to end on the gallows?"

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Fröbel fell upon him. "No, no, no, no! You won't even be suspected. I've thought it all out!"

Gadsky's patience was at an end. He freed himself roughly from the man's clasp and held his rifle behind his back. When he saw Fröbel in a state of collapse lean against the wall of the trench and sob like a child, a shadow of pity arose above his disgust and he tried to convey to him the kindly and encouraging message of Ensign von Krülow. He tried to screen all coming danger behind the anecdote of the elder Krülow and painted Fröbel's ultimate home-coming out of captivity in the most alluring colors. He was finally ashamed of the mushiness of the story.

But Fröbel scarcely listened. Gadsky had first of all told him of the captain's suspicions and that upset his whole plan. He broke down utterly, cowered on the earth, his head upon his knees, and his pointed shoulders shook. Then he pulled himself together a little and spread out his arms and said in a voice as toneless as though it came from a great distance, "I can't. I assure you I've tried. I simply can't understand you. I know that there's nothing worse in store for me than for you and all the others. But I can't understand you. It always seems to me as if all of you must be pretending, just playing up to each other. I keep asking myself: Do these men realize that when it comes to actual dying they'll have to stop acting? Or do they count on recognition after death? I can't understand

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how a man can be willing to give up his life for a word of praise of which he'll be as unconscious as this stone." He took his head between his hands and pressed on his temples with all his might and cried out almost at the top of his voice: "I've determined a thousand times to pull myself together; I know that the others jeer at me, that my stripes will be torn off if I don't improve. In vain. A thousand times I've determined to be braver at the next danger, just as brave as the others who aren't killed either right away, just because they don't crouch so low or even stand up. But then I always ask myself again: Is your life worth less to you than an appreciative word from the captain? Is it better to rot with your stripes under the earth, or to be disgraced and branded, but alive? Does any one really know what people say of him when he's dead? I can't get around that, much as I try."

The man's confession arose from an unfathomable depth, sincere, tormented, moving. And yet it filled Gadsby with a cold repulsion. The man's whine revolted him just because it seemed to express as by means of a crazy caricature the very fight he had fought out in his own soul, and because it voiced shameful thoughts that he had crushed into silence. He saw the convulsive fingers that were stretched out toward him as though he were a plank—and he turned away in deep distaste for this love of self that forgot wholly that another man was hovering over the

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same abyss and needed all his energy to hold himself erect.

Fröbel felt the disgust of his friend. He shook his head sadly and fell silent for a while. Then he bent quite near Gadsby again and whispered to him as though he were betraying a great secret, "Look, right behind that observation stand Dangler's body is lying. They haven't buried him yet. Twice since noon I went over there and looked at him. Ten hours ago he was alive. He might still have been alive. But he volunteered for dangerous duty just because he wanted the iron cross before his next leave. You remember how proudly he looked around and how his eyes shone when the captain pointed him out as a model soldier. Look into his eyes now! He lies next to a heap of boards there and he's no better than a board himself. You can saw him in half; you can burn him; he'd never know it. What good is it to him now that he was a model soldier yesterday? Oh, if you knew how I've tortured myself. But no—it's beyond me. While I was standing by him the sun appeared for just a second and shone into his eyes, into his terrible, white eyes that seem to follow you about when you move. And like a crazy man I called out to him and asked him if he'd do the same thing over again, or whether he wouldn't rather have another glimpse of the sun and go home to his wife and child without a cross, unpraised, despised, spat upon, but erect on his legs that now fall back to the earth like pieces of wood when you

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lift them. Oh, I tell you, I would have given the world to have had him answer me that question! I could have split open his head to discover whether you know when you're dead, that you've died a hero, died an honorable death."

He gasped and gasped and wrenching sobs shook his body. He could not master himself and stretched out his hands toward Gadsky. "I know you despise me now because I'm a coward, because I beg you to save me without asking what'll become of you and our comrades. But I can't help myself! There must be something in you that I haven't got! You must all have some belief that I can't share. Otherwise you couldn't play this way with your lives; you couldn't let people set you the task of dying as if it were a lesson for which you wanted a good mark. I can't take it that way, dear Mr. Gadsky—I simply can't."

His voice was smothered in tears. Gadsky gave him a somber glance and shook his head contemptuously. There was no help for this man and there was no reason why he should let his own hard-won self-possession be undermined. The last straw was that the man talked so loud that the conversation might easily be overheard from the communication trench and reported to the captain. There had been a wavering shadow yonder that he hadn't quite trusted. With quick determination he lifted his rifle and started to go.

Fröbel flung himself at his feet again and em-

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braced his knees. "No, no! Don't leave me! Don't, dear Mr. Gadsby! I can't do it myself. No one will ever know. For God's sake!"

Gadsby thrust him back wildly. "Attention! Some one is watching us."

Fröbel fell silent and looked about him apathetically. Then the shadow which had awakened Gadsby's suspicion emerged from the sandbags and the tall, slender figure of Krülow appeared turning the corner. Gadsby breathed a breath of relief. He bent over Fröbel to help him up.

"How can you propose anything like that to a comrade?" Krülow asked in a muffled tone. "If I report you, you will be disgraced, tried, probably shot and your poor family would get no pension. If I fail to report you, it is only out of compassion for your poor wife. But I want you to remember that you drive her and your child into shame and want by your cowardice." He dried the sweat on his forehead which had gathered from the effort it cost him to speak so. Then, after a moment's reflection, he stretched out his hand and said sternly: "You may go."

Fröbel slunk tottering away. They could hear the sobs in his throat until he had turned the corner. The two friends remained silent for a little while. The painful scene that had passed still lay between them. Gadsby knew how hard it was for Krülow to play the officer's part toward older men, to scold the father of a family as though he were a school boy. And so they

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stood for a little until Krülow conquered his sensitiveness and said, "You rushed past me without noticing me. But the way Fröbel pursued you made me suspect something. I didn't mean to listen. But I was afraid some one else might. So I watched." He sighed with relief. He had freed himself from any possible suspicion that his friend might harbor. And now he resumed his ordinary tone of familiar friendship. "Won't you join me in the officers' dugout for a bit? I'm alone there. The gentlemen have gone over into the neighboring sector for a conference." He looked at his watch. "They can't be back in less than an hour."

Silently they went through the deserted communication trench and entered the officers' dugout. Gadsby left his rifle at the entrance. He looked around. There was nothing, God knows, in the room, nothing on the walls that could have aroused a private's envy. The dugout was neither better nor better furnished than the caves of the men. And yet, whenever he entered it, Gadsby felt oppressed and rebellious. He couldn't help thinking of the peasants at home who had turned their hats in their hands when they had entered his father's office. The feeling came to him not, assuredly, from anything in the appearance or equipment of this place. But he could not forgive the dark hole for the fact that he, George Gadsby, had stood at attention at its door like a lackey.

The ensign invited him to sit at the center

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table that rested on four rough posts rammed into the earth, and offered him a cigarette. Then they stared silently into the little lamp, fettered by the tension that was in them. For Gadskey guessed that Krülow had invited him in for a definite reason. He saw his friend's narrow, pale face grow restless and the corners of his mouth twitch and felt that beneath the high, smooth forehead the thoughts were crystallizing into a thing difficult to say.

Krülow noticed his glance and said sadly: "I'm sorry for poor Fröbel. It was heartbreaking to see him leave his wife. I remember how he kept calling out to her long after the train had left the station."

Gadskey shrugged his shoulders and continued silent. Surely it was not for this . . . Krülow was evidently trying to gain time. He tried to start on another subject to divert himself. But his large, astonished eyes sought Gadskey's face oftener and oftener and at last his slender arm crept slowly across the table. "I . . . I wanted to thank you before . . ."

Gadskey gazed at him in astonishment. He felt the clear, warm glance upon his face. And with a sharp ache in his throat he pressed the proffered hand.

"You can't quite understand, I know, and I can't explain it very well, what the friendship of you two fellows has meant to me. I'll have no chance to tell poor Weiler. So I wanted, at least, to thank you." He lowered his eyes and

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hesitated again and then began anew with a steadier energy.

"I've often told you what a hard time I had at the military school. Imagine your passing your whole childhood and youth without one soul-comrade, teacher, relative, who had any understanding for your love of music. Imagine every one around you—without exception—loving whatever you abhorred, and jeering at everything that inspired you as low and unmanly. Wouldn't you have been tempted to believe that the fault, the defect, lay in you? I had no experience, you see, nothing but my dreams, and since I couldn't believe that the whole world was spiritually crippled I naturally thought that I was." He took a deep breath and his cheeks glowed and one felt that every word came from hidden depths and at the cost of a great effort. "As I've told you before, my zeal was my misfortune—my unappeasable hunger for intellectual food. Everything that was in the text-books—and I had few others—and everything that my teachers happened to say fell into my mind as into a well. And again and again I came upon contradictions that I couldn't explain. I was willing to let my pastor persuade me of the contemptible immorality of the Jesuits and of their motto that the end justifies the means. But when I timidly asked whether the use of cunning and deceit in war, the attempt to catch your enemy napping, was not dictated by the same principle, I was sternly condemned as harboring an immoral

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opinion. I was proud—and justly proud—of the iron resistance which my ancestors had opposed to every one who would rob them of their freedom and their German character. And yet my father whipped me when, in the summer, at our country place which was near the linguistic boundary, I applied the same argument to the nationalistic efforts of the Poles. I couldn't be satisfied with the explanation that in war victory justifies a belief not only in the greater power, but in the higher morality and righteousness of the victorious nation, for I observed in history that no defeated nation ever reasoned thus concerning its conquerors. And indeed, it seemed to me that this was a remnant of the medieval idea of God's intervention in combat and led directly to oppression and violence. I hinted these things to my brothers and to my comrades, but I found none who was plagued by such doubts. I was no weakling. But there were naturally some who were stronger and in reality more brutal than I. Modest as I was, I couldn't feel that I was more worthless than these rough fellows who took no interest in anything but fights and practical jokes. Neither was I inclined to take revenge on the younger boys for the miseries I suffered at the hands of the older ones. So I had no compensation whatever. Thus, since I knew from my own experience the nature of oppression, I could not think oppression a sacred thing if practiced by one social group over another. And so, as in the nationalistic atmosphere

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of any modern state, it was brought home to me that I alone did not love the fatherland as it was my duty to love it."

He had arisen and walked around the table and stretched out both hands toward Gadsby. "Can you imagine what it meant to me when you and Weiler revealed to me a world in which I had no longer any need to be ashamed? It was like some old fairy-tale in which the crooked back of the child is suddenly made straight! You two expressed openly, and as a matter of course, everything that I had barely dared, with infinite doubt and hesitation, to confess to my own heart. For the first time in life I felt as though I didn't bear some mark of secret shame. For the first time I had a circle in which I could truly be at home, for the first time . . ." He interrupted himself and his suddenly embarrassed eyes sought the dark corners of the dugout. And with a deep but hasty and final word of gratitude he dropped Gadsby's hands.

Gadsby understood him. Before him too had arisen the image of Mathilde's little reception room with the Louis XVI chairs that had assumed an almost hectic fragility when her friends had begun to appear in the strange clumsiness of their military boots. He heard again the bright, dear laughter of Mathilde which always came so beautifully at the right moment when any debate threatened to develop a touch of undue heat. Oh, he remembered those last Sunday afternoons, so sweet and so bitter, that seemed

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like the slow dying and tragic farewell flare of a beautiful, vanishing world. The whole melancholy magic of those last few cultivated conversations over her delicate teacups arose in his heart once more and contracted it. These farewell hours had emerged like rare stepping-stones from the humiliation of the week's morass, in which one sank deeper and more hopelessly month by month. He looked at Krülow's averted face and he knew that they were both far away for a moment from this noisome hole in the earth, and he closed his eyes, as though he could thus capture the image that traveled by them for a last time.

When he looked up again and took in Krülow's slender figure from the small, beautifully shaped head to the narrow, aristocratic feet, the tormenting thought entered his mind that this dreamy, beautiful lad who was made for love would have to go under here without ever having known it. . . . A nameless bitterness arose in him and the strange and subtle thought that Krülow was the one man to whom he would not have grudged Mathilde in the event of his own earlier death. But he rejected the melancholy of this mood with a vigorous oath and said: "We say good-by to each other here as if it were a cut and dried fact that the devil will fetch us in the morning. We're not quite at that point yet. Let's defend ourselves!"

Krülow didn't answer. But he shook his head with a tired smile.

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"What does that mean?" Gadsy burst out. "Don't you intend to put up a fight for your life?"

Krülw looked past him in an embarrassed way and said: "Never mind about that. There's no use. And I suppose I must ask you to go now."

But Gadsy refused to be put off in that way. Suspiciously he scrutinized the pale, resigned features of his friend and reminded him of the fortunate escape of his own brother.

"Oh, everything is possible . . ." Krülw answered and his eyes wandered again. Then he tried surreptitiously to steer Gadsy toward the entrance. "It's all the same in the end. We must all die some time. Whether it's a few years earlier or later . . ."

"You can't get rid of me so easily," Gadsy said firmly. "I've got to talk you out of this mood. You're quite, quite wrong. Nature doesn't work that way. She works like an industrious sculptor at the heads of her victims. In the course of months the chin is pointed, the cheek-bones are raised, the eyes hollowed and not until the skull has almost swallowed up the face, not until the thread is thin to the vanishing point does fate cut it. It is by no means the same thing whether a tooth is torn from your young and vigorous gums against your will, or whether an old man's tooth drops easily from his enfeebled jaw. We must fight for our lives. I talked quite as you do so long as death was afar off like a

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bogey man that no one quite believes in. But during the night I thought hard. And I know now that our present and obvious duty is to defend ourselves. All other considerations can wait."

"And I have done my thinking, too," said Krülow very quietly and seemed suddenly to withdraw himself into an austere loneliness of soul while his face grew stern and gray and his gentle mouth hard and determined.

"Listen, Krülow," Gadsy cried and went up to him, "I give you my word of honor that I won't leave you unless . . ."

Krülow smiled again and put his hand on Gadsy's shoulder and his voice had all its own gentleness. "What do you want me to do? I'm willing to grant that you're right. I didn't mean it that way, anyhow. Of course there's a great difference between dying at twenty or seventy. All I meant was that all men—whether early or late is no part of the argument—must die. You cannot draw your first breath without obligating yourself to draw your last. From the moment that we received the gift of life we also received our condemnation to death." He paused for a moment and said in an impassioned and uplifted voice, "But we are not all condemned to kill! Millions die without having stained their hands with the blood of their brothers! And that is a decision which each man must make for himself."

"Yes," Gadsy cried, "but he must also decide

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whether it is not his duty to preserve his life at the expense of others who would be an infinitely smaller loss to the world than himself." He leaped back into the middle of the room. "On the kind of people that survive this filth depends the whole future of humanity. I, personally, have probably already done my best work, I could do little but repeat my achievements. But even I am worth defending to the last breath. Promise me to do the same! Have you a vision of what the future would be like if all high-minded men who have recognized the brutal stupidity of war were to permit themselves to be cut down without resistance and leave the earth to the beasts and the fools? We understand each other, you and I. And I ask you: Do you think our captain will fail to resist and do you want him and his kind to have the ordering of the future?"

"He has the right to resist," Krülow said, and joined him near the table. "He has the right because he firmly believes that it is a good deed to kill as many soldiers of the enemy as possible. His conviction is an honest one."

"Ah, never mind about his convictions. That's true enough. But when it comes to the point he'll fight quite simply for his life. Death is a ticklish business."

Krülow shook his head. His face had assumed its usual aspect. But instead of his accustomed timidity he showed an expression of mystical and utter certainty which occasionally appears

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on the faces of silent, thoughtful people when at last they show the full treasure of their hearts and minds.

"No," he said, "you do not understand the militarist of the captain's type. He has existed in every age; he exists to-day in every country. He is even more dangerous, but far less ignoble than you think. I've been through it all and I know. For you, Gadsby, death was only a distant threat of which you didn't think, a creditor of whom you hated to be reminded. But to the men of my class death—death in the service of our king and country—is the daily familiar thing of all our thoughts and scenes and studies from childhood on. There is no piece in your repertory that you have rehearsed so often and so thoroughly as Captain von der Otte has rehearsed the death he will die when morning comes. His studies, his work, his private and professional life all culminate and were meant to culminate in this final and supreme act. Everything he has ever done or thought has contributed to the sacrifice he will make to-morrow. And he awaits that to-morrow in no very different mood from yours when you prepared yourself for your first public appearance as an artist."

He ceased for a moment as though exhausted and then went on once more with a sharp and bitter little smile. "Poor Fröbel wasn't so far wrong in his analysis. There's a bit of play-acting about it all, however unconscious. People like our captain do not, from their point of view,

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die alone. And though the enemy were to let him starve in a subterranean cell into which no human eye can penetrate, yet the feeling that he is dying for his king and his country would surround his martyrdom with a host of invisible witnesses. All the great generals from Hannibal to Napoleon, and from Moltke to Hindenburg, all the lesser heroes in the traditions of his regiment, all the teachers and the comrades of his youth will seem to be there and to nod their applause when Captain von der Otte once more shows the Frenchmen how a Prussian officer can die! Ah, that is it! He believes! He has the faith! He has the right to defend himself, for he truly believes that the deed which is dishonorable when done from personal motives is illustrious and glorious if it brings new might and new wealth to his sovereign lord, the king. He believes—and is he, alas, so far wrong?—that the world admires a country that can strew the fields of battle with the bodies of its bravest sons; he holds it to be his sacred duty to leave the enemy no choice but death or submission to his country's will. And does not the very enemy, who is filled with the identical faith, sustain him in his own? Then why should he not defend himself? Why should he not kill or else be killed, since the kernel and marrow and backbone of his entire life is in this faith? He would rather have renounced life itself long ago than the opportunity of this honor! It's all, you see, a question of the inner man. What makes this day so insufferably

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hard for us is that we are asked to die for the ideals of Captain von der Otte and not for that which seems beautiful and important to ourselves. And so, since there is no salvation for us, since we must die—there is but one thing left us: to change the aim and purpose of our sacrifice. I shall push my own faith into the foreground and death will no longer be too hard to bear.”

Tormented by a keen uncertainty, Gadsby walked rapidly up and down the floor of the dug-out. Now and then he stopped to regard the flaming and determined face of his friend. The music of the lad's voice had captured him; he felt an almost fatherly anxiety. He sought in all the corners of his brain for something, some hope, some task with which to sting into new energy Krülow's will to live. And he remembered suddenly Mathilde's strange assertion that the little ensign wore an invisible crown of thorns and that the occasional glint as of a Savonarola in his gentle features made him so charming. Ah, women had a fine instinct for these hidden passions of the soul. Perhaps that accounted for Krülow's reverential adoration of Mathilde. He felt that she knew, that she guessed. . . . And suddenly Gadsby determined, as a last resort, to use her name. He approached the table once more and exclaimed: “I wish Fräulein von Moellnitz were here to help me. She'd set you straight!”

Krülow turned away and his cheeks flamed.

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The name had been hovering between them unexpressed. Now it was suddenly flung at him. It was like a blow. He clasped his hands behind him and walked to the other end of the room. Gadsby felt sorry and sought for words in which to ask the other's pardon. But Krülow mastered his emotion, returned and answered quietly and with an almost cool superiority, "I am convinced that Fräulein von Moellnitz would understand me. She confessed to me that she was deeply repelled by the men who came back from the front, radiant and boasting of the murders on their conscience like criminals in a den of thugs." He reflected for a moment and then laid his hand on Gadsby's shoulder with an air of finality. "You must believe me when I say that I have reflected on these things thoroughly. And long before last night. From the moment that I saw the first dead and wounded, I knew with the utmost certainty that nothing—nothing in all this world—could possibly justify or sanctify murder. The conviction which I long suspected in myself has now become an unalterable certainty of my soul. And I owe that not least of all to you and to Fräulein von Moellnitz herself. I do not believe that there are any circumstances which can make it honorable to pierce the bodies of men with bayonets or bullets. And I do not believe that any one has the right to require that deed of me. All that any one can ask is that I should die rather than give up my faith. And that I shall do. I shall not kill! I will neither

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stab nor shoot. For the fact that other and sorely misguided men will seek to take my life is no reason for me to yield to the same madness. I shall die for what I hold to be my duty, for what seems good and honorable to myself, precisely as our captain will do. Please don't try to persuade me. It would be quite useless. And you must go now. If you were found here it might be embarrassing to us both. We'll see each other later. And perhaps we won't reach the extremity this time. We may be able to withdraw before the French attack." Jestingly but with the faintest suggestion of seriousness he added: "Please go now or I'll have to act the officer."

It was still with an inner resistance that Gadsky approached the opening of the dugout. And when, for the last time, he surveyed the whole grim plainness of the room and saw himself standing there hand in hand with Krülow, a saying of Fröbel's flashed into his mind: "They're all play-acting." And wasn't it like a well-managed scene? Like the effective curtain of an heroic dramatic action? Two men in the dark night . . . death lying in wait for them . . . the image of a beloved woman hovers above them both . . . silently they grasp each other's hands . . . there are tears that do not reach the eye. Ah, no! This lad, at least, was not acting. He was throwing his young life away without thinking of any effect it would have. And indeed his way of doing it would be thought soiling and degrading. And yet, and yet, and yet—Gadsky

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felt it in a moment of troubled and supreme insight—into this farewell of theirs there entered something of the false feeling of all the age-long declamations concerning the readiness of true men for an honorable death, and the courage of warriors! Honest as was their dumb determination, free as they felt themselves of any concern for the crowd and its judgments, yet deep within them slumbered their boyhood's admiration for heroes who threw their lives away like copper coins—deep in them glowed the fever with which they had read the nights away over heroic stories of old times—deep in them throbbed the poison of that immemorial tradition of blood and tears. And like a sudden prescience, far and faint, there came to Gadsby's mind the prophetic thought of a new romance that would be built of Fröbel's indestructible will to live, of Krülow's fanatical reverence for life—the new romance of a new and better world. But the vision was lost in the disconsolateness of the present and he permitted the cool, slightly vibrating hands of his friend to lead him out into the darkness of the trench.

Outside he remained standing for a while. There were tears in his throat. He was tempted to return and not to desist until he had wrung a promise from Krülow. With a heavy sigh he at last took up his rifle and vowed a solemn vow not to leave Krülow's side on the morrow, to risk his own life for him at every moment. Then at last he turned to go.

In front of the men's dugout he turned reso-

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lutely away. He wanted to pass alone the few hours until dawn. He did not want to endure the judgment of Fröbel's tearful glances. He turned up the collar of his greatcoat and went out to seek some hidden corner. Perhaps he might get a little sleep yet. Already the darkness above the trench was turning into a blackish blue; the wind had fallen; only far above, under the invisible vault, a roaring could be heard.

A few steps from the empty munition box toward which he was going, he saw a soldier resting his head against the wall of the trench. He looked closer and recognized the little Jewish tailor whom they called the "vaudeville man." "Well, what did I tell you?" The words came to him sadly. Yet despite his sympathy he smiled at the involuntary singsong of the voice, which reminded him of nights in variety theaters and of merry anecdotes and seemed so strange and contradictory amid the sandbags and the trench mortars.

Gadsky sought for some consoling thing that he could say to the small man, and finally told him the story of the older Krülow which, somehow, didn't sound very convincing. The tailor did not answer for a time, carefully withdrawing his face within the protecting shadow. Then suddenly he pulled up his shoulders and extended his arms and answered bitterly: "That's very fine for a Mr. von Krülow, for an aristocrat who rode horseback already when he still had a rubber nipple in his mouth. If I get that same

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shot into my little tailor's lungs I'd be dead before the Frenchmen got to our trench. And anyhow, why do you want to make me feel hopeful? You might better help me to give up hope. For ten hours I've been trying to persuade myself that it's all over with me and I can't believe it yet."

Gadsky lowered his head and stared at his boots. It was sad to hear this ready jester talk in that unaccustomed way. And God knows, he was right. Why revive hope here? And yet Gadsky couldn't bear to leave the poor devil alone with his equanimity which was so hard-won and which suited him as little as the trench-helmet did his face. And so in farewell he laid his hand on the tailor's shoulder and willingly put all the human warmth he felt into his voice: "Why do you stay out here? It's much easier to bear among others where one must pull oneself together."

Before he had ended the sentence the shoulder slipped from his touch and a suddenly strange and hate-filled voice struck on his ears. "No, thank you. Fröbel has that right, but not I. I was just thinking as you came along, how well off the rest of you are. If you happen to be brave you're one of the many splendid German fighters. If you sit in the dugout, pale as a sheet, with your eyes full of tears, you're just the cowardly Karl Fröbel, let us say. That's all. But I've got to go and hide here because my three Jewish comrades in the battalion would be made to pay

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for every sigh I might indulge myself in. And do I help any one, I ask you, if I do pull myself together? I've just been asking myself what good it will do if I die here as grandly as if I'd been a lion tamer all my life and not a Jewish tailor? It will help no one, I tell you—no one in the world will be the better for it. When my two boys grow up they'll be called cowardly Jews just the same and no one will ask whether their father was a tiger or a hare."

Deeply shaken Gadsby listened to the man's grim bitterness. Was it really the "vaudeville man" who spoke thus? Could one thus live side by side with a human being for months and not suspect the bitterness that ate into his soul? "Your two boys will not be called that," he said with all the energy and conviction of which he was capable. "Surely you are making that impossible by your own . . ."

A sarcastic laugh interrupted him. "You think so? Then listen to me. Yesterday it was my turn to clean the officers' dugout. And there I picked up several copies of the paper which is sent to the captain. Do you want to read an article I read there? I can show it to you. There you'll see it printed black on white that the Jews are the worst profiteers in the war, that they're the only ones who sell shoes with paper soles and take usurious interest and then go and swamp the expensive restaurants. The man that wrote that doesn't know anything, of course, about the four of us here in the battalion. Oh,

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no, what he knows about is the expensive restaurants. Otherwise how would he know who eats there? But can you tell me why he never takes a look at the back page of one of the liberal papers—the so-called Jewish press—and finds out about the crowd of Siegfried Cohns and Moritz Rosenthals of whom it is announced there either that they have received the iron cross or else that they have fallen on the field of honor? Don't tell me! My boys have just such crooked noses and crooked legs as I have. And the people who meet them will always connect them in their thoughts with the fat profiteers whom they've seen somewhere eating lobsters or decked with diamonds, and no one, no one, I tell you, will think of the many thousands of crooked noses who have fed the worms at every front!—No, no, you needn't excuse yourself. I know it isn't your fault."

Silently Gadsby held out his hand to the little man. He was profoundly moved by that last sentence which was meant to take the sting out of all the sharp accusations he had made. He felt the gratitude to him personally that shone in those final words and the heartiness with which the little man took his hand put him to shame. For hadn't he also once thoughtlessly joined in the cheap jests of others when a certain fat woman in her best clothes, flanked by two boys with curved noses, had come to the barracks to call for her husband on Sunday? How much true self-mastery, how much corroding and

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valiantly suppressed indignation did this little man hide behind his courtesy and his pleasant humor! And because in the loneliness of his last hours, in the isolation which he had stubbornly sought, he heard a gracious word, because one open ear was lent to the lightening of his righteous anger before it died forever—for so little he was grateful and had pressed the hand of his enemy as though it had been a brother's.

It was hard to find a reply. For what the man said was no result of a fleeting mood. It had been thought over a thousand times; it had been suffered for in many hours of humiliation. After long hesitation and shuddering, even while he said it, over its frosty banality, Gadsky said: "You take too black a view." The man accepted the conventionality of the saying and replied with a forced laugh, "Why shouldn't I? As you know, my name is Black."

And again, as in the officers' dugout, the feeling came over Gadsky that he was on a stage. And he felt like asking: Why do we try to play up to each other now? He dropped the tailor's hand, chilled by the realization of the fact that only his presence constrained that valiant little coward to force a few last jesting words to his lips. Why compel him to pretend any longer?

Hastily he went, throwing behind him the words: "Good luck!"

The little man laughed. "Luck? What do you mean by luck now? Wish me a clean bullet straight through the head."

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Gadsky carried the bitter jest away with him. With great strides he hurried back to the empty ammunition box and sank down on it as weary as though he had been broken on the wheel, as burdened as though all the heaviness of heart of which he had become aware were resting on his back—as though Krülow's will to death and Fröbel's raging terror and the Jew's terrible accusation had all turned to stone and were dragging him down an abyss. And all that—what an infinitesimal part it was of the sum of life and suffering here. Oh, it was but one drop which to-morrow would be sucked up by the rays of the indifferent sun.

Krülow, the Jew, Fröbel, himself, the whole battalion and several adjoining battalions—it was all hardly worth mentioning. If the enemy were only held until the division could occupy the newly prepared positions, every telegraph wire to-morrow night would tingle with the triumphant message: "With negligible losses we succeeded in withdrawing to carefully prepared positions and unhindered by the enemy, etc, etc."

"Negligible losses"—yes, that would mean them. The dread of that last night, the crippling of their terrible will to live—"Negligible losses"—copper coins that you throw on a table without counting.

A soft gray was sickering through the darkness and raised out of the black chasm at his feet the boards which ran through the trench.

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The shovels and spades that lay there, the rifles that leaned against the walls, these were not yet distinguishable and only gradually detached themselves from the solid darkness, as if assuming their forms for the first time. And while his eyes clung to the emerging contours of a spade or a rifle, there arose within him stubbornly again and again the expression: "Lifeless objects . . . lifeless objects." And this expression seemed itself gradually to attain to visible form and to weigh him down and tug and tear at his heart with the yearning over the inviolability which it expressed.

Nothing could harm these things. A shell might shatter the handle or roll up the metal into the likeness of a strange flower. These dead things could not die. The terrible step into the land of insensibility, the wrenching from life, the incomprehensible secret that cried from every human corpse—these dead things knew nothing of it—nothing of its terrors. Truly, poor Fröbel was right: It was not easy to think oneself the like of a trench spade. And yet it was so. A survivor who might put one foot on a broken shaft and the other on the dead breast of George Gadsby would . . .

He sprang up wildly, enraged at himself and gazed over the top of the trench out into the field. He saw emptiness. Only the nearest posts, only the hillocks immediately in front of the trench stood out in the darkness shot with silvery gray.

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And beyond there, behind the curtain which still protected both—there sat the others. There sat men, holding their heads in their hands, dreading the morning like himself. They might conceivably be acquaintances, even friends of his; there might be crouching there the son of a Frenchwoman who had once kissed him with such fevered lips. And perhaps some one who had admired him in Paris and pressed his hands enthusiastically would strike him down to-day with rifle butt or bayonet like a mad, dangerous beast. Why?

Was that not madness? Was that not the very blindness of unreason?

His thoughts glided back to his first hand-to-hand fight—the only one that he had gone through. His groping expectation was constantly being pushed out of consciousness by memory until he re-lived all the horrors of that first fight anew and also transposed it into the future. He did not recall many details for, from that moment in which, without any protection, he had stormed out across the open plain, a strange security had mastered him as though the government of his limbs had been transferred to some one outside of himself. He had heard his blood roar in his ears and a red curtain had descended over his eyes, so that he neither heard nor saw but yielded passively to that other who was leading him. He ran as though a wire were pulling him, lifted his arm in defense, as though some one else had pulled it upward and struck

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out with a rage which came from his mind and yet not from it . . . What had that impulse been? The will to live? The blind passion to survive? He didn't know. The whole thing smoldered in his memory like a mystery that one hesitated to touch. But he had a keen recollection of the moment of awakening and of the horror he had felt at the sight of his blood-flecked hands.

Would it return at the moment of supreme danger—that feeling of mystic security?

He looked about him and by now he could see the whole of the straight trench and every pack and rifle was clearly distinguishable.

Day was no longer far away.

He shivered and moved from the trench wall that had given him support and started to return to the dugout. There was no chance of sleep out here. The fresh and vigorous morning air awakened all his senses. He meant to go down there where the brooding of the others, the atmosphere of their dread might descend like a heavy fog upon his eyes and brain.

Half way to the dugout he was overtaken by a shrill, whining scream that suddenly arose in the distance and slowly came toward them. Heavy shells! . . . He stopped with that hard, keen tension in his face that even after a thousand experiences still convulsed soul and body. . . . The grenades fell only a few yards short; they caused the posts of the wire entanglements to rise to dizzy heights and strewed a hail of

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earth and stone across Gadsby's path. From every corner about him soldiers emerged, some with the sleep still in their eyes and dragging their blankets behind them. Like frightened game they came from under their cover. Gadsby was drawn along by the gathering mass, was caught by the air pressure of another grenade and hurled against the trench wall, heard a creaking and bursting behind him, a cry, and ran on without glancing back.

At the door of the dugout stood the senior lieutenant, affecting entire calm and thoroughly immersed in a conversation with the sergeant. From afar Gadsby saw his jeering, challenging smile that met him and at once resumed a normal pace. He passed the two quite slowly, threw back his head defiantly and heard the lieutenant's biting words: "Why don't you hurry? Late for something?"

What was it Fröbel had said: "Is my life of less value than an appreciative word from the captain?"

If any one had told Gadsby one short year ago—that he, of all people, would assume a hypocritical demeanor in the very face of death for the sake of an insignificant little bank-clerk whose shoulder strap bore a silver bauble!

With compressed lips, with infinite anger against himself and those others who caused men, as though they were trained dogs, to jump through flaming hoops, he crept into the dugout and, utterly weary, fell down on his straw mat-

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tress. Yes, he was tired—tired, above all, of this senseless comedy, this wretched game which would have been so unspeakably trivial and contemptible if it had not been for all the blood . . . He looked up. He felt oppressed by the bodies of all the men who seemed to drag his strength out of him; he felt buried as in a forest . . .

The dugout was crowded. One could scarcely stir one's arm without irritating one's neighbor. It was a great coil of troubled faces, a heap of men in utter dread tied to each other by that common fear. "Negligible losses," Gadsy murmured to himself. "Oh, yes, negligible . . ."

He looked at them again and nodded. Then he closed his eyes, unable to bear the sight any longer. For a second the mad suspicion flamed up in him that it must, after all, be but an evil dream. Life here was but one cry for an awakening from it—for a disappearance of the wires and the helmets and all the useless pain. He could almost have smiled to welcome that awakening. Then he turned his head to one side—and fell asleep.

Above him the grenades hammered. Every moment the opening of the dugout might collapse or be buried. With every explosion the faces there grew paler at the vision of being stamped out or drowned in a flood of earth. Gadsy slept. Oppressed by the thick atmosphere of the overcrowded cave a snake-like coil of dream images whirled through his brain. He

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saw his own body lying in the field, reduced to a little heap like that of the Frenchman. He recognized himself and heard the others in the trench discuss his death and so he was glad to know that all consciousness did not depart with life. The only thing that pained him was that he couldn't remember dying at all. He tried and tried. He wanted to know whether the extinction of life had been painful or whether, perhaps, it had been less terrible than one imagined, and he was angry over his own forgetfulness. What was to be done now? He couldn't die a second time! Was the uncertainty to weigh him down always? He tried with all his might to remember and then the scene changed and merged into one in which he was a prisoner of the enemy and was surrounded by all his Parisian friends. They were all there, even the women, and were all dressed in the queerest uniforms and took him by the hand and did not seem hostile at all. But he breathed more easily when his old friend and patron the Marquis de Puys, in a general's uniform ablaze with decorations, scattered the throng of the others and led him out to his car. He knew perfectly (within the dream) that the old gentleman had died before the war and that at the request of the family he himself had played the organ—a thing he rarely did—at the solemn requiem mass in the Madeleine! And the thought came to him to ask the general concerning the latter's experience of death. But the car drove on with such mad swiftness that the rush

of the air made it impossible for him to utter a word. He heard the thunder of the motor, held fast to the car and flew suddenly—sobbing with the blessedness of it—into Mathilde's arms. He drew her along with him, up a great stairway and into glittering halls that merged into darkness behind them and led her to a piano. He cried out in wild delight as his fingers touched the blessed keys again and then, with a roar of pain and horror, observed suddenly that both of his legs had been amputated far above the knees. The tiny stumps that remained could not reach the pedals, try as he would. Beside himself, he hammered with his fists down on the accursed instrument and shrieked with pain and rage—and woke up.

Astonished he looked about, pursued by his own terrible cry which now came from quite near him and from other lips. The senior lieutenant lay not two feet from him, swimming in his own blood, unspeakably mutilated, convulsively trying to free his hands and plunge them into the great scarlet hole that cleft his abdomen. Gradually, too, Gadsby recognized the captain who was bending over his fellow-officer with a careworn face. He jumped up. What had happened? Didn't the captain too have bloody scratches on his forehead? A grenade must have hit the officers' dugout!

And Krülow? The fright went through his body like a blade. Where was Krülow? In wild haste his eyes searched the room and the world

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swayed with him as he recognized nowhere the dear, small head of his friend. He made his way forward through the crowd at the entrance. In vain. He leaned against the wall of the trench, scarcely mastering the sobs that arose in his throat. He made the difficult decision to question the sergeant who was covered with earth and who must have witnessed the happening. That stern individual looked him over coldly but finally condescended to give some information. The ensign had had the extraordinary good luck of having been ordered out of the dugout an hour ago and sent on a special "mission." The sergeant made no indication as to the character of the "mission." But it was evidently a matter touching their coöperation with another battalion since the sergeant mentioned the name of a young lieutenant who belonged to it.

Deeply relieved Gadsby withdrew, straining every nerve not to permit a certain emotion to rise into the field of consciousness. He would not, would not envy his friend. He drove the thought away and yet heard the word "saved" ring in his ears as from the blast of a bugle.

Was he envious? Envious? No! God knows he was glad the dear, warm-hearted boy would live—

As from the window of an express train he saw again the hospital garden of his vision and the ensign and the two others behind the hedge of lilacs. And he tore himself away from the vision and from the loathsomeness of his envious

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yearning. Convulsively he sought for some diversion and looked back into the dugout where now an officer's coat had been thrown over a stirless heap upon the ground. How mysterious was that quiet. Among an hundred sleepers, each covered by an identical coat, he would have undertaken at once to point out the coat that covered a dead man, so cruel was the stillness that lay within its folds. Less than an hour ago this man had jeered at another fleeing from death; he had thus jeered at death itself. And now he was the first to have reached this goal. The grenades that from time to time plunged so deep into the neighboring earth that the dugout swayed like a ship's cabin would trouble him no more. If the secret "mission" led through the fire that was going on now, poor Krülow's luck wasn't so remarkable. Perhaps, who could tell? he lay even now in some crater—lay like this man . . .

Luck? What did it mean now? A clean bullet through one's head.

What had become of the little "vaudeville man," he wondered. He looked about and his eyes rested suddenly on an extraordinary scene: the corporal on duty stood in one corner, bent over and talking to some one invisible. He gesticulated, drew his hand across his forehead, tried to drag the invisible man up by force and ever again threw an anxious glance in the direction of the captain.

Gadsky was curious. He approached and rec-

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ognized in the supine figure the "Capuchin" who had joined the battalion shortly before its departure to the front and who, usually, condescended to speak to no one. He now crouched on the earth, pale as a sheet, his missal and his rosary clutched in his fleshy fingers and only from time to time shook his head stubbornly. A chill stole over Gadsby. The "Capuchin" was refusing obedience in the very face of the enemy and would not go up into the trench! It was his turn for sentry duty and he—refused! If only the captain would not notice. Of course he was quite right. As long as the heavy calibered guns hammered this way the enemy wouldn't leave his trenches. But the captain! Anxiously Gadsby followed the corporal's eyes. Fortunately the captain was attending eagerly to something else.

"I'm not going," the "Capuchin" suddenly declared at the top of his voice. At once everybody turned around and all eyes were directed toward that corner.

The forehead of the corporal was moist from his efforts. He threw up his arms in despair and declared in an angry voice: "All right then. It's not my fault—not mine!"

Gadsby motioned to the man. His action was utterly senseless. But he didn't move. He pressed his rosary to his breast and shook his hairy head.

They told the story in the battalion that the man had really been a father of the Capuchin order and had thrown his robe and cowl aside

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shortly before the war in order to be able to marry. And suddenly Gadsby remembered that on the way from the barracks to the station a pale blonde woman had marched next to the bearded man. And had she not been with child? The bull-necked giant looked quite like one who might tear down the structure of his life for the sake of a woman. And was he anxious now to fling that life away since the war had so soon shattered his hard-won happiness?

Gadsby's glance pierced that pallid face. He wanted to go over to him. But it would have been too noticeable since he stood halfway between the captain and the strange man. Why, he asked himself regretfully, had he happened never to have exchanged a single word with him?

"I'm not going!" For a second time the words echoed through the place and cut the mounting silence so sharply that Gadsby abandoned hope and turned aside. Yet something in him plead for a respite—some kind, from anywhere—as it had done when he was a child and had not known his lesson and had seen the teacher approach his name in the class book. Only the conversation of the captain could now be heard in the silence. "No, oh, no!" something said in Gadsby. But already the fatal sentence sounded from the captain's lips and stopped all hearts as though they were ticking watches.

"What's the matter over there?" Oh, how he disliked that harsh, official voice. The bearded man arose slowly. The silence grew tenser and

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uglier with every moment. The corporal approached the captain and stammered out his report with tired, unhappy gestures. Then the Capuchin opened his lips and flung the words "I will not go," like sharp stones straight into the captain's face.

The captain drew back. His jaws set like steel. He seemed to bark out his words. The bearded man wrapped himself in his silence. It was not until the captain laid his hand on his revolver and repeated his question that a scarcely noticeable trembling went through the man's mighty body and his pale lips rolled the word "no!" like a fragment of rock to the captain's feet.

An invisible noose seemed to strangle every man present. Immovable stood those hundred figures and endured with a dull defiance the keen eyes of the captain that searched their rows. The silence seemed to arise like a beast with an hundred claws ready to fall upon the tamer who, with a quick decision, raised his revolver and took aim.

Gadsky closed his eyes and held his ears. But the report did not ring out. The captain lowered his weapon and cried out: "I shall not even let your body fall among loyal men, you dog!" And his voice rose to a still higher pitch as he gave the order: "Officer Fröbel and five men to form a firing-squad!"

Gadsky started. That—that was impossible! Fröbel? Karl Fröbel who had embraced his

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knees in his extreme and unmanly fear! *He* was to execute this man? No! His eyes dilated with terror and disgust as the form of Fröbel actually emerged from a corner and approached falteringly as a flame that flickers in the wind. Would he really . . . really. . . ?

The captain's eyes leaped about the room but no other man stepped forth. They stood in somber, silent groups and a deadly hatred seemed suddenly to beat into the captain's face. The latter muttered an incomprehensible curse and with a wave of his hand separated from their fellows the five men who stood nearest to him.

And at this fatal moment of highest tension, as Gadsky was slowly approaching Fröbel and struggling with the determination to put him to an ultimate human test—into this throttling excitement there burst a miracle.

The bearded man lifted up his voice and sang. Sang with a wonderful and mellow voice, with a warm, rich baritone that streamed from his mouth golden-clear as wild honey—sang with a voice that rose to the ceiling and burst it and brought sunshine and mountain air into that suffocating hole. He sang an *Ave Maria* and the prayer spread out its wings and came beseechingly and bathed in tears, yet also radiantly from his throat—came with the sweet and heavy softness as from an old 'cello whose heart the centuries had stained and mellowed.

Gadsky threw wide his arms as to embrace his beloved. "Music!" "Music!" his heart spoke

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jubilantly. He glowed with a blessed pride as though he were father and son and brother of this voice, and in his eyes there was a challenge and a mighty boast as though he would have all men acknowledge on their knees the magic of his art—his art.

"Et benedicta tu!" the jubilant voice rose higher and the singer crossed the threshold which he seemed to raise into the radiance of his voice and drew them all with him and took the heaviness from the earthen faces and stagnant limbs about him, so that they felt the earth blossom at their feet and clung to this voice and let their souls be carried by it out of that cave and far away from stench and fear. . . .

"Music!" Gadsky's heart felt triumphant. He gazed at the captain and a hot gratitude filled his eyes, for even that hard face was struggling to maintain its harshness and the command that urged the firing-squad forward sounded more like a cry for help than a threat.

A master's bow passed over the strings of that divine instrument as it sobbed out to the Mother of God: *"Ora pro nobis, nobis peccatoribus!"* And each man's breath stopped as though the singer were taking it from him, only to let it pour back dipped in a golden endless melody.

Gadsky closed his eyes. He heard the accompaniment in his inner ear, and his fingers played on invisible keys and wove the dark, great web of organ tones until the austere measures arose

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like a forest of noble firs from whose sides poured the clear ichor of this most blessed human voice.

He went forth and followed the song as though it were a procession and he a neophyte and he had long, long forgotten whither that voice was traveling. He had forgotten death, the captain, the six rifles, the singer's fate. His body and his soul vibrated to the tones. "Will he take the high C too?" That was his only thought and his muscles grew tense as though he could help the singer climb the divine height.

Ah, he took it! The tone seemed indeed to come from above first with a threatening quiver, then in a glorified clearness.

Gadsky gave himself up to the beauty of it. Then he shook, for the voice suddenly grew smaller as though it were now but an echo of itself or had been sucked up by the depth of the dark trench. Then it ceased. There resounded the fourfold crack of rifle-fire. A fifth detonation limped behind. A harsh voice cried: "You cowardly crew! Do you want to close up the entrance?"

It took a while for Gadsky to comprehend. At first he couldn't believe that so much glory could be destroyed, could be smashed as simply as a pane of glass. Then he cried out, beside himself. He stormed along with clenched fists and wanted to throttle those vile murderers who had broken the holy instrument that God the Father seemed to have been playing upon His own knee.

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Four strong arms thrust him back and a wild whispering beat down upon him until sobbing, forgetful of his purpose and exhausted, he sank down in his corner.

A fluttering and hoarse cry of command rolled through the cave which had just echoed the divine music. The ultimate hour had come. The voice wakened a hundred fold echo that brought Gadsky to his feet too. He permitted himself to be shoved and dragged to the entrance by the scrambling crowd and took a deep breath as the cold, vigorous air of the trench filled his lungs. Now he woke up. One moment he stood still, overwhelmed by the comfortless devastation all about him. He saw the singer lying there, blood on his beard, the blessed lips still open. . . . Then he heard the captain's voice snap out and, as on that other occasion, a strange exterior will asserted itself over him and hurled him to the breastworks into the face of danger.

Blue as the sea on the Côte d'Azur he saw the wave of attacking Frenchmen pour over hills and shell craters with breathless swiftness. His blood hammered. Involuntarily he loosened his collar. For a moment he was strangely moved as he heard from the approaching troops the hoarse strains of the "Marseillaise." How often had he played it and with his magic technique rolled marvelous variations of it across the keys. And now that melody fell upon him like a mad dog with a hundred sharp teeth of polished steel.

He would defend himself!

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Exalted by this resolution he jerked his rifle to his shoulder, took aim and fired. He continued to fire calmly at the first line of the blue wave; he fired as firmly as though all the energies of his body had gathered in his hands. But the flood came nearer and nearer. Bits of earth that had just seemed far from them shimmered blue at the next moment. Gadsky kept firing and took a new magazine from his pocket with mechanical exactness. He was animated by the one thought now: His life was at stake.

"Formez vos bataillons!" it sounded clearly from amid the rough voices. A certain hardness in the singing, a certain relentlessness awakened Gadsky's defiance. He cried out toward them: "No!" He cried out toward those men who marched up so bravely to what they thought the fine task of cutting George Gadsky's throat. No, they should not succeed, they should not get him. Not as long as he could stir a finger. "Sing on," he cried, "I'll spoil your singing for you!" A strange intoxication had come upon him. Almost painfully his hands grasped his rifle. He aimed and fired, aimed and fired. His eager eyes tried to persuade him that the blue line was thinning out. But the accursed wave did not sicker into the sand. It was too great a wave, composed of too many drops, and it rolled over the field, rolled over the brown furrows and came nearer and nearer despite the many splashes of forever moveless blue which it was forced to leave behind.

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"*Qu'un sang impur,*" they roared, almost upon him now. And those words which Gadsby, even in times of peace, had always thought ignoble, made a great rage flame up in him now, so strong that he could control himself no longer, but had to utter it in words. "We shall see—*sang impur, sang impur*—Yes, it *shall* mix with yours, my "unclean blood"—it shall mix, it shall mix!" And he repeated the phrase blindly after each shot.

Now they no longer permitted themselves to be merely shot down. They were near enough to let a hail storm of hand-grenades rattle down on the trench. The first grenades fell short; Gadsby saw them burst, tear up the earth, hurl earth and stones into the air and his whole body trembled with a sudden access of measureless bitterness and rage. Just so they wanted to tear open his warm and living body, thus were his life and his blood to be flung out to spatter the earth.

They worked their way agonizedly through the wire entanglements, pulled down the stakes, trod on the wires, came nearer and nearer! Most of them had long ceased singing. Here and there a single voice still croaked miserably, but was soon lost in the moans and cries and whines of the wounded men who struggled like gigantic insects in the wires and were pitilessly stamped into the mud by their fellows who came behind them. But they came nearer and nearer. And above the bursting of the hand-grenades he could

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now hear out of his own trench the moaning and crying of his stricken comrades.

A wild curse escaped him when he found no munition left in his belt. Some one must help him out! He turned around and his blood froze at the sight of the gaps that had been torn in the ranks. So many and so soon! The whole bottom of the trench was filled with a coil of creeping men and bloody limbs stretched out in horrible confusion. Here and there one sat erect and with an unspeakable melancholy regarded his wound. Oh, was it conceivable that fate permitted men to be so tormented and stamped upon and scattered on the earth like refuse! The words of Krülow thundered their silent message into Gadsky's ear out of this cave of death and lamentation, and from his innermost depth there arose a helpless sobbing and an uncontrollable indignation, and tears of pain and rage leaped from him as from a child that feels the pain of an undeserved punishment.

"Scoundrels!" he cried out into the deafening hubbub and felt himself exalted and lifted up almost physically by a sudden, nameless hatred. Oh, if he could only have taken all the men, all, in every land of earth who had helped to spread this bloody carpet at his feet, who had helped to weave it, who rejoiced in their work and sought to cover it with an illusion of false glamor—if he could have grasped them and pressed and stamped them into this morass of lacerated human flesh. . . .

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"Scoundrels!" he roared hoarsely and almost unconscious from the pitiable whining and moaning that flowed into him from the trench behind. But that strange power that once again led him to his own defense drew him to the pile of hand-grenades that lay a few feet away against the wall. He let his rifle drag behind him and sprang toward the grenades and knew only in a dream-like and detached way that his soles had trodden upon living flesh. But he was in a hurry. He heard those others above; he knew the sharp teeth that were ready for his flesh. He gathered as many of the grenades as he could hold and started back.

But suddenly he stood still. For his feet were entangled in an unearthly grasp. He stared down and he thought that his eyes would turn to stone. For what held him was the dead hand of a mutilated man. And the man was Fröbel—was what had once been Karl Fröbel and was now but a mass of blood and filth and earth. Nothing of him remained recognizable save the right half of his face which seemed yet, in the rigidity of death, to cry out its reproach at him. Ah, what could he have done? Was not an equal fate awaiting him? Did he not have to carry his own body with its resisting instincts into the slaughter? Might he not rather envy him who had already suffered the inevitable and was now at peace?

And that strange envy did come to him and stole into his very marrow so that for a moment,

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devoid of all will, he stared at the mangled body of the man—that body which now had nothing more to fear of pain or of indignity. And then he remembered that other's words. Yes, yes, it was possible, it was so! Karl Fröbel was no more. There was a thing . . . a log. . . .

Wildly he tore himself free and followed the others who clambered up the ladders and rude steps and helped each other over the edge so as not to perish in the trench like rats in a hole. Gasping under the burden of grenades which he had assumed Gadsby climbed over the top of the trench. When he arrived he was so filled with a feeling that he had come too late that, without looking about, he stormed forward toward the blue ranks of the enemy.

He plunged madly into that mass of men, felt himself gripped and hurled aside and saw the blue ranks roll on beyond him. He remained behind, dizzy from the blow he had received. But what had happened? He stood there astonished. Gradually he realized that he had ventured forth too far, that the wave of men, drawn by the arms and weapons that opposed it, had rolled past him and was now flowing forward toward his old trench. Stinging sweat seemed to pour over his left shoulder. At last he determined to look and saw his sleeve ripped and bloody from a thrust or blow that one of the passing men had given him. But he could still move his arm. He let his rifle slip from him and, grasping a grenade in his right hand, turned to pursue the enemy. But

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he remained transfixed with contorted lips and watched the madness that was unleashed before him.

The lines both of his comrades and of his adversaries had definitely broken. Isolated knots of men that now and then were coiled into larger groups and then separated again were contending with each other. There was no singing now on either side. In silent bitterness they hammered at each other and there was no sound except the crash of rifle-butts and the bursting of bones, and the cries and curses of the wounded and the painful gasping and coughing of all those creatures in torment. Gadsby swung the grenade above his head. But he did not dare to hurl it. For he could no longer aim at any enemy. All clean division had disappeared in that monstrous coil. Everywhere there was the intermingled waving of gray and blue-clad arms like the many limbs of a variegated polypus; nowhere could he see any mass of blue definite enough to aim at.

Into his hesitating mood there burst from the right a cry, rising steeply as a rocket, throttled by the very extremity of human fear: "No!—No!—No!" It was a well-known voice and he saw the little "vaudeville" man hurled to his knees by an immensely tall Frenchman who held him by the collar and turned to another group so soon as he had seen him fall. But a black-bearded man in front of him swung his rifle-butt high in the air.

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"No!" the tailor tried to cry out once more. Gadsby too wanted to cry out and to hasten forward to help. But he stood moveless, fascinated by the horror of the whirring weapon. A howl of inhuman rage burst from him as the blow fell and crashed with a terrible cracking and grinding straight into the upturned face. His grenade flew and a momentary relief loosened his rigid limbs as he saw the bearded man burst open and reel forward. But even in that moment the sight of that destroyed human face had sunk immeasurably deep into his soul. This face that had been loved, that had been longed for, that had been kissed, had become a single gaping hole. The eyes which had but now looked so beseechingly, the curved nose that had often brought jeers upon the brave heart, both had been crushed into that single, crimson hole framed only by the teeth and the dark hair.

With superhuman force that great anger broke forth again in Gadsby, that raging, sobbing and yet impersonal anger over a world that let such things be done, that lay abed and followed its business while human faces were obliterated with wooden clubs. Oh, from whatever depth there was in him boiled his avenging hatred against all those in all the world who hid such realities under the boom of false words and taught children, whose fathers were being disemboweled like beasts, words and thoughts concerning the glory and nobility of war!

His grenades flew in rapid succession into the

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thinning groups. He saw them strike and even while his own bitter will to live forced the others into his hand, the tears streamed down his face and he sped words, like arrows, into the rhythm of his hurling.

His grenades were nearly gone. He swung the one before the last above his head. At that moment the strange, impersonal force that guided him in battle drew the veil of tears and hatred from his eyes. And he saw the faces, contorted with rage, that were separating themselves from the coil of men and turning toward him who had become a new source of danger. Swiftly he bent down, grasped his rifle by the barrel, swung it high and ran to meet his murderers. Trembling in every limb, blinded and deafened by an inner flickering and roaring, he struck and struck without seeing where the blows of his club fell. And all he was aware of at this moment was his own life, his own life surrounded by merciless murderers who would crash his face into his head. He must get free of their blows and their claws. He wanted his life. And he struck and thrust and hammered—until suddenly he stood in a strange stillness, alone with his shaking knees, alone with the gasping of his lungs and the throbbing of his heart.

"Was he saved?" The question flamed up in his soul. He did not dare to turn around. He did not dare to look down upon the warm and heavy weight that lay at his feet. "Was he saved?" He asked himself again, doubting and

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yet hopeful. He flung out his hand seeking for some support, unable to hold himself erect, seized by a great dizziness that seemed suddenly to whirl about him.

But at that moment from the distance a familiar sound came to his ears. A new wave of blue was approaching—a reënforcement of fresh men. And from a hundred throats it thundered: "*Allons enfants de la patrie!*" He let his arms fall beside him disconsolately. Then a determination flared up in him: he would give himself up. He had done his duty. His hands, his arms, his shoulders, his whole body was bathed in blood. His skin and his clothes were in tatters. His munition was exhausted. Yes, he had the right to yield himself prisoner.

But the captain?

His anger against that harsh and limited intelligence broke forth again. Because even now the man had the power on pain of death to forbid his saving his life. But where was the captain? Was he even alive?

Blindly his eyes fled past the wounded and the dead toward the right wing where a last group was still fighting. Immediately at the edge of the trench that group still swayed back and forth. Every now and then a fragment of it broke off and fell backward into the trench and fought on there and the roar of the overcome was terrible to hear.

Gadsky wavered. Was he to plunge in again? Was he to risk his life once more?

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No! The French reënforcements that were coming up were tenfold superior—more than tenfold—to the little group that was still so desperately defending itself. Even the captain would not demand . . .

That coil of fight at the trench's edge rolled nearer. He could see better now. And anger and disgust and also a great compassion choked him as he saw four men, four bleeding, lacerated men defend themselves against insuperable odds. One of them was the captain. His uniform was in shreds; the skin of his skull had been severed and a rag of it hung down hiding his left eye. His right eye was glassy and bloodshot. But he fought like a wild boar at bay. They struck at him from all sides. He defended himself with the butt of a splintered rifle, coughing, gasping, the bloody foam flecking his lips and face . . .

At that moment he must have heard the singing of the French reënforcements. For he uttered a great cry and flung back his head and began to sing hoarsely, brokenly, terribly: "*Deutschland, Deutschland, über Alles, über Alles . . .*"

As though upborne by invisible arms and flung forward, Gadsby hurled himself toward that group. So moving was the disproportion between that one croaking voice and the mighty chorus of the enemy, that his compassion with the weakness of that voice flooded and washed away all his scruples. He ran, overcoming the spongy resistance of the dead beneath his feet,

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until midway he stopped and his half-uttered cry: "Here, captain!" died on his lips.

It was too late.

The long Frenchman who had first pulled down the Jewish tailor from behind had crept forth from the trench and, with one vigorous thrust, plunged a bayonet into the captain's back. Gadsby saw the point appear through the chest immediately below the neck, saw the captain throw himself upward so that for a moment he dangled almost in mid-air, and fall. Then he turned swiftly toward the new ranks that were approaching, dropped his rifle and searched in his numbed brain for the words with which he would announce his readiness to yield. He stood there wildly and stubbornly hoping for the sight of some face he knew among the approaching Frenchmen.

Then a sudden stinging suspicion that immediately became certainty smote upon him. There was an immediate danger. The group that had overcome the captain. . . . That tall Frenchman was still behind him. He swung around and saw the tall, blue figure arise immediately in front of him and saw the narrow, shining blade rush toward his breast—and threw himself back, grasping the head of his enemy with both hands . . .

The wild teeth bit into his hands: he felt a rending pain in his palms and opened them with the unutterable horror of the thought: "My hands . . . I can't play again" . . . ! And he

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tried to stretch out his arms to see if the irreparable had happened.

But all he saw was two red spots gleam through a veil. Then he heard a deafening crashing and grinding as though his teeth were being mashed to pulp, and a thunder behind his forehead in his very brain . . . Wearily he let his head drop on his right shoulder and sank back into the darkness of night. . . .

IV

THE TRAITOR

IV

THE TRAITOR

IN narrow beams the sunlight fell in from above, sharp and hot. It flowed over the golden candelabra in front of the altar; impudently it raised the saints from their accustomed darkness so that they looked like rouged actors, helpless and intimidated and ashamed of their cheap gaudiness. A single, stray shell had succeeded in robbing the old church of its consecrated air. Neither the beds along the wall nor the wretched pallets under the columns had been able to do that. The place stared at one as naked as a looted shop. It seemed as though all the influences which the faithful had brought here during the centuries, the hopes they had carried to the altar, the burdens they had cast aside, had taken flight through the windows which gaped in the walls like open wounds. For the beautiful stained glass that had so long kept the echoes of perished song and the sound of priestly words from floating into the godless world, had been shattered by that stray, unaimed projectile and lay in fragments in the little graveyard without.

Two sleepy French ambulance men stirred

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among the fragments of glass with their canes, deciphered a bit of an inscription now and then, played with the remnants of saints' pictures as with a Chinese puzzle and made coarse jests and laughed. But soon they grew tired of their game, for the sun burned down on the graveyard and drove them back into the shadow of the church walls.

There they lay down again on their coats, their packs under their heads, precisely as they had lain yesterday and the day before, and yawned and heard the bees hum and took up the thread of their complaining where they had broken it off half an hour ago.

"Isn't it the craziest thing?" grunted the larger of the two, a robust, broad-shouldered Walloon with a tangled, blond beard. "At the front they hunt 'em like rabbits and tear 'em up so they'll have hard time finding their right limbs on judgment day. And here in the rear we've got to watch so that the damned boches can die quiet in the church. Not that I care. Nothing can happen here. That stray shell last night is the last we'll know of them. I bet they're near the Rhine by now."

The smaller man shrugged his shoulders contemptuously, and threw a suspicious glance at his comrade. "You don't like their grenades, eh? Well, I'd rather have the worst drum fire than stand this church. They lie there as dumb as fishes and stare at you and die. Is it a soldier's work to sit here and wait till they die and are

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ready to be buried? By God, we sit here like two ravens waiting for carrion."

The blond man laughed his coarse laugh. "You're right. They are like the whitefish when you tear the hook out of their jaw-bones and let 'em flop down bloody in the boat. But what do you expect 'em to say? Sister knows as little German as you or I. How many are there, anyhow?"

The big man's loud cheerfulness made his companion nervous. His face assumed a troubled look and his tone was vexed. "They left us twenty-one day before yesterday. Since then we've dug holes for six. You know that as well as I. Two a day. If it goes on that way we'll have to dig graves for another week."

He spat and fell silent. His eyes sought the distance where, beyond the ruins of the village and the shattered trees, the high road bounded the horizon like a smoking line. There the vehicles rolled by—night and day, an endless chain of wagons. Every now and then a great sudden whirl of smoke, dark as the sand column whirled up by a grenade, betrayed the whizzing by of an auto. The soldier sighed wretchedly and brought his clenched fist down on his hard pillow and repeated: "By God, like ravens!"

But there was no assent to his words. His comrade lay with open lips and slept. Thoughtfully the small man regarded the rigid, expressionless face, the open gullet, thought of the many bodies they had picked up in the last few

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days and was tempted to awaken his neighbor by a vigorous shake. But he restrained himself and glanced once more at the melancholy spectacle before him—the wall of dust in the distance, the blackened ruins, the torn graveyard with its heaps of glittering glass. Everything was gray, dispeopled, vaulted by smoke and fume, bedded in deadly silence. Not even the rattle of an automobile broke the stillness. The church was too far from the high road. “Like a lonely island in the middle of the ocean,” the soldier thought. He threw himself angrily down beside his companion and soon they were both snoring.

Sister Marie sat on the highest step at the door of the church. Her elbow leaned upon her drawn-up knees; her chin rested on her hands. Her careworn face gleamed for a moment when, after a brief interruption, she heard the accustomed duet once more. It was too comical—the men’s unlimited capacity for sleep at any time of the night or day. She herself had scarcely closed an eye for thrice twenty-four hours; she could hardly hold herself up on her burning soles; from under her red and swollen lids she stared in a drugged way out upon the blinding light of the square.

She knew no longer where to turn. A dozen times at least she had sent the two men out to the road to give her pressing message to the drivers and motorcycle men and despatch bearers. Perhaps these men had not reached the hos-

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pital headquarters in the great confusion; perhaps they had simply forgotten to deliver the message. There was no sense, at all events, in shaking the two men out of their sleep and sending them out still another time. And they might even refuse. For the small man had gone so far in daring as to stop an auto that belonged to the General Staff and, according to his story, had narrowly escaped being shot by the indignant major who could not realize how, in the midst of a victorious advance, as he was racing back to the staff with the most magnificent news, any one could have the impudence to stop him with a story about a lack of medical supplies as if he were a damned pill-slinger. No, there was no hope in these hurrying men. They came from the front where the bodies of men lay in mounds, they drove past crowds of men with ashen faces, past the wounded who dragged themselves along on their shattered limbs and vainly and dumbly besought help from every vehicle. And so, how could she expect any one who had passed so many horrors to recall the story of the little church with its suffering enemies.

And yet what other hope was there? She couldn't simply go on vaguely waiting. The bandages needed absolutely to be renewed. They were stiff with blood; they chafed the healing wounds open again. The small store of supplies left behind by the fleeing Germans had long been used up. Only the telephone apparatus still

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stood there. Ironically the severed wire dangled from the window.

The sister's eyes filled with tears. Was she patiently to watch one after the other of the poor fellows in there get gangrenous and die? Her whole body quivered with indignation at the consciencelessness of the people who had stationed her here and then forgotten her. For three days she had thrilled joyously every time an auto passed on the distant road; her eyes had clung to the cloud of dust as though they could drag the car from the high road to the stony street that led to the church. Now she was vexed at her own credulity and could not help reproaching herself for some share in the responsibility for the whole misfortune. For had she not been a witness of the joyous confusion which broke out when suddenly the ambulances drove up and some one cried out a command through the halls: "Pack up everything! We are advancing! The Germans are falling back! Victory! Victory!" The whole field hospital had, in a sense, gone mad. And she herself, in spite of her sixty years, had she not let the word victory intoxicate her? And had she not again let three days pass now without making a move?

For a whole year, since the days of the first skirmishes, she had been a surgical nurse in the field. She knew from experience what happened in the hospitals after whole days of fighting when the wagons came in endless file and all corridors were filled with the blood-stained

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stretchers. The surgeons would sweat like stokers at their work and it would need to be an officer of high rank or some one who had special influence for a patient to be operated on or bandaged afresh on the very day of his arrival. And not only enemies, but even their own men, poor moaning *poilus* who begged to be bandaged afresh, were scolded and pushed back roughly when they held out their bloody stumps to the doctor who, after twelve hours of toil in the summer heat and the fumes of blood and chloroform, had no compassion left except for his own unspeakable exhaustion. So it was but natural (as it was her duty to have foreseen) that the staff physician would forget his hasty promise and, in the excitement of a victorious advance, abandon her and her twenty German wounded.

The guilt was hers alone. It was her crime that twenty young, strong men for whom wives and mothers were in dread and fear at home, must here die a most wretched death.

Her fists clenched, her head fallen forward, a silent sobbing in her throat, Sister Marie seemed to collapse more and more. With her natural instinct of a nun of magnifying and subtilizing all her sins, she wrung from herself—as though she were her own confessor—the admission that, had French wounded been lying in the church, she would probably, nay, certainly, have sent for help far sooner and not risked the lives of her countrymen so rashly. She, a bride of Christ, had divided her suffering fellowmen into friends

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and enemies, precisely like the military surgeons who always sent the French wounded back in automobiles, but forced the Germans, if they could but drag themselves, to crawl the twelve miles to the hospital on foot. How could she have had trust enough to be patient at all with the memory of those wanderers before her? It seemed to her that she could still feel the look on her face of the tall, pale, emaciated German when the harsh word of command had rung out and he had twisted his terribly swollen foot about a rough stick and had begun to limp along his way of the Cross with all the helplessness of unendurable pain in his blue eyes. And now? Now this man whom she had not been able to beg off was saved; he had been operated on and lay, well bandaged, in the hospital. And these others whom she had taken into her refuge shook with gangrenous fever, formed pus in their wounds and were dedicated to certain death.

Must her soul, her soul, really expiate all that guilt?

No!

Pressing her hands upon her knees she pulled herself slowly up. Staggering with weariness she went along the wall to the soldiers. With desperate eloquence she explained to them both the danger in which her patients were, begged, threatened, confessed too that she had already taken off and used as bandages her own body linen, and her crumpled, old face flushed as with maidenly shame before these men's eyes that

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now knew her bare body to be hidden from them only by her black robe.

The Walloon was not to be moved. The small man said he was ready to go out to the road once more. As for going directly for help—he resented the very suggestion. The field constables were stationed everywhere like spiders, he said, ready to catch any poor soldier whom they found in the fighting zones alone and without a written permit from the military authorities.

The tall man lost patience when even this consideration did not cause the nurse to desist from her prayers. She was a hellish good patriot, according to him, quite willing to send an honest *poilu* into trouble for the sake of a handful of boches who had one foot in the grave anyhow. Enraged he pulled his comrade along with him, swearing he would not lift a hand again for this woman and her devilish church.

Pale as death the poor sister dragged herself back to her seat. She shivered and gazed through the open door into the church as though the devil really awaited her there and grinned at her through the vain expectations of the fifteen souls. There was nothing left for her to do but wait and close the eyes of the dying . . . Her knees trembled as she leaned against the pillar behind her. She could not find the courage for a round among the beds. Even this morning several of the men had tried to rise and with threatening, flashing eyes had demanded a surgeon. Others had strained and strained to trans-

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late their direst needs into French. And the gleam of hope in their poor faces when they succeeded in uttering the necessary words was harder for her to bear than the reproaches of the more indignant ones. Now too, she heard a call every now and then or the sound of a brief conversation in the church. And it all sounded to the sister as though every word was a curse directed against her. Was she to excuse herself? Was she to tell them the truth? But that would be robbing them of all hope, to place death before their very eyes . . .

Suddenly she felt herself strong again and lifted her head and sent a grateful glance to heaven. She saw her particular task before her! She was prepared to take upon herself all the hatred which, she felt sure, met her from all those beds, in order that these poor men might keep their faith that medical aid was sure to come and to make up for all that the indolence of their nurse had caused.

Softly she slipped into the church on her felt slippers. Without looking to the right or to the left she went straight to a bed that stood in the middle surrounded by straw pallets. When she reached it she felt as though she had gained a refuge, so deep was her sympathy for the young officer who, afflicted with a bad abdominal wound, had been struggling with death here for ten long days. He was somehow different from his comrades. She could nurse him without the ugly feeling of touching an enemy who had sent,

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heaven knows how many, good Frenchmen to their death. At the bedsides of the others, too, she tried honestly to lose that feeling. On the first day she had carried all the strange uniforms into a corner of the church so as to see nothing but suffering fellowmen. And yet it was hard. From the chatter of the two French soldiers it had suddenly become clear to her what it was that always obtruded itself like a wall between her and these men and diminished her compassion. "They lie there dumb as fishes . . ." She heard that over and over again—that was it. She had nursed and bandaged so many Frenchmen and had seen them suffer and die. They moaned and whimpered and complained; they were like weak and helpless children whom one could console and pity actively. But these strangers who lay in her church were not like sick children. They bore their sufferings with compressed lips and without complaint. They remained grave men to their last breath. A defiant pride shone from their eyes and seemed to exclude all pity. And she could not help thinking that these must be hard men who could be so hard toward their own suffering flesh. She had heard similar stories about the English. But she felt that there must be a difference.

Only the lad in that isolated bed had eyes of another kind. He seemed more familiar to her, even though he spoke less French than his comrades and although his name, beautifully inscribed on a card over his bed sounded inexpress-

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sibly foreign to her: "*Ensign Egas von Krülow.*" The poor sister could not even guess at his rank. It was different with the lieutenants and the majors, for those words were the same in her own tongue. But at least this youth would let her pity him a little and looked grateful into her eyes when she spoke comforting words and even groaned with pain now and then.

Impelled by her warm compassion she leaned over his bed and passed her hand tenderly over his glowing forehead.

He was already drifting over the edge of life. But his mind was in a feverish ecstasy, out of which arose bubbles of memory as though the river of life had to be remounted once more before its current ceased. His fingers grasped after figures that glided by, a monotonous murmuring moved his lips, anger and joy chased each other in swift alternation across his yellowish face, which had become old and furrowed as though he had swiftly lived through the fifty remaining years which his youth might claim. Only his body did not stir. It lay under the covers small and shrunken in the glow of fever.

A tender smile hovered on his lips, a recognition of the cool hand that touched his forehead so gently. The touch completed the memory in his fevered brain. . . . It had been just so on the night in his childhood when the flames threatened his bed—his little white, lacquered bed with the tall sides. For hours he had been wondering where the little tongues of flame came from

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which now warmed him, like old friends, and now flared up angrily and seemed to singe his eyelids or drop like molten lava into his brain. What wild and woeful things he had dreamed! . . . Thank God, he was at home, in his dear, little room and not in the great bare church to which he had had to flee because a devil pursued him, a great, black, hairy devil whom surely, quite surely he had met before. Oh, he could well remember the sharp, three-pronged pitchfork which the monster kept dipping into his abdomen. Once, he knew, he himself had handled such a fork. But his hand had grown since then.

No, he hadn't merely dreamed that devil. That fiend had really broken the windows in his rage over the successful flight of his victim. Or was it . . . ? Was it but the old, Italian doll that stood on the shelf among his other toys, who had a long tongue of red cloth and flames of red cloth sewn on his cowl? Then perhaps father would come in with his terrible willow switch and push the gentle mother aside and lift him up and . . . whip him . . . whip him. . . .

A loud and penetrating cry of fear echoed through the church so that all the sick men started up and stared at Ensign von Krülow who was writhing in his bed as though he were beside himself. He didn't want to be whipped. He was grown now and he defended himself with all his might against the unhead-of injustice of being punished for misbehavior that he had expiated so long ago. For on that night when the

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flames came, it had been impressed upon him that a boy must not show fear. He had been told that whoever wore the emperor's coat must set his teeth even at seven and rather suffer terror than be a coward and call for his mother. And he had since learned what it was to repress everything—everything for fear of being laughed at. He had learned it so thoroughly that the consciousness of having cried out, of having failed in manly self-control drove the sweat of fear upon his brow.

Had they heard him? . . . Surreptitiously he opened his eyes but closed them again with a moan, for the light seemed molten and hot and to drop like liquid fire into his brain. So he was in that church, after all. And that fork was stirring in his entrails, too. Only his mother was no longer there and her shadow no longer guarded him from the sight of the tongues of flame. Her visit was the only thing he had dreamed. The flight into the church, the torments—it was all reality. But the cool, kind hand he sought in vain.

So she had really died? . . . They had not lied to him. She was dead and there was no one left in the world to whom he could pour out his heart, to whom he could be tender? He felt the sobs rise in his throat and bit his teeth into his nether lip and stretched every nerve in deadly fear. For again he saw the commandant of the military school sit at his desk, handling a telegram. And he knew what was at stake. If he

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didn't succeed now in imitating the demeanor of his brothers; if a single tear escaped him, all the officers would be instructed to teach him self-control and all the petty tyranny would victimize him again.

No, he didn't want to be called a sissy again and be tormented and jeered at and despised. Rather than live those years over again he would follow his mother into the darkness. When he had been with her he had had no need to dissemble. She had shared his indignation over the roughness of so many of his companions. She did not even despise him when, at the end of the summer vacation, he threw himself with bitter tears into her arms and begged her not to send him back to school. Why was she not here now? Why did she not protect him now that he needed her protection so sorely? He felt his forehead where the hand had touched him. He would so liked to have called her as in the old days when there had been no happiness for him comparable to that of being ill and being nursed by her. And he felt a mad yearning to be petted and consoled and pitied. And he did not realize that his fevered lips cried out into the echoing church all the thoughts that stirred in his sick brain.

Sister Marie knelt praying at the altar when she was startled by a loud cry from him—a sudden cry for help that soon changed into a reproachful moaning. Anxiously she bent over him, pressed his hand softly and whispered: "*Vous souffrez?—Patience! Ça ira mieux.*"

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Egas von Krülow did not understand the words. Only the tone he heard, the tone that he had heard no more since his mother died. And he felt the cool hand. The voice was music—the blending of a thousand dear words that he had missed so long. His whole body seemed to relax in a warm well-being to let in the blessed sound. With a beatific smile he stretched out his arms to draw down the beloved voice nearer to himself, and to it he told of his pain and begged it tearfully, like a frightened child, for his young life.

The sister had stepped back. Her face was red, her temples throbbed, as though all the rusty hinges of her old heart had begun to move smoothly at the sight of the youth's outstretched arms. She looked shyly about her and uttered a cry at sight of a strange face that arose near her—a face apparently hewn of stone.

It was the face of an officer who lay in a bed against the wall. He had raised himself up with superhuman exertion and had listened to the ensign with a flame of anger in his eyes. He looked ghastly with his white lips and his blond mustache which seemed alien and strawy in his pallid pain-distorted face. He leaned as far over as he could and cried: "For God's sake, man, grit your teeth! Do you want to shame us all with your goings on?"

Rigid with astonishment the sister listened to the hard and angry voice. She saw the heads of the others rise from their pillows and send a

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fire of angry looks at the youth in the lonely bed. She guessed from the tone of the words which now sounded from all sides that some strange force had arisen in the whole church that was hostile to her dying favorite. Utterly confused she gazed at the many angry faces.

Egas von Krülow had dragged himself up too. His breast labored and a great anger showed on his face. He stretched out his right arm and clutched at the air. His lips sought to form words, his poor powerless lips, words that so desired to leap into the world. He did not see the yellow face of his fellow officer. His fever blinded vision could not reach to the next bed. He saw only dim outlines, but these blended into an image which his great indignation created. For it was not an individual who had cried out those words to him—it was the dragon, the Minotaur that had devoured all his childhood and all his youth, the enemy that had grudged him every caress and every tender word.

Now at last he could grasp the monster, now he could lay hands upon it. . . . His chest expanded, his mouth opened, all his imprisoned pride rebelled against that thing of evil that he desired to confront sternly for a last time. But even this tragic satisfaction was denied him! The words rose only to his lips. Then his strength failed. Instead of the heavy words of judgment and revolt, a thick stream of blood issued from his mouth. Once more he looked about him for help with his great frightened eyes.

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Then he sank slowly back into the sister's arms—slowly and gently as a stricken bird.

A cold, estranged silence filled the church when, shortly before sundown, the two French stretcher-bearers came for the body. Covered only by his blood-stained greatcoat they carried him past his comrades. They laid him down on the naked earth near the glittering fragments of glass.

"Measure him!" the tall fellow grunted with a cynical shrug. The other obeyed silently and with his spade drew two light furrows in the earth at the head and feet of the dead man. The big man tapped his shoulder.

"Look at his hands, will you? Like a princess's. Believe me, he didn't want to die! He might have had a lot of fun yet."

The small man shook his head angrily. "Rot! Nobody wants to die—rich or poor." And hurriedly, as though fearing further comment, he lifted his spade and plunged it viciously into the earth as though he were striking at his worst enemy.

The big man still stood thoughtfully, lost in his contemplation of the body. "If his mother could see him!" he cried with an ugly grin. "I suppose she's sitting on a fine upholstered chair knitting a silk muffler so that her little son don't catch cold."

Like an angry little dog the small man barked

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out at his companion: "Stop your damn' talk. Go to work!"

The other grumbled, turned up his sleeves slowly, examined his spade, glanced at the setting sun, spat and went to work.

The last rays of the sun penetrated the dust whirled up by the high road. There was no sound but the heavy breathing of the two gravediggers and the crunching of their spades against the flinty earth.

V

PRISONERS OF WAR

V

PRISONERS OF WAR

THE lake gleamed in the overwhelming sunlight. In its angle between cliff and water glittered Lucerne, which, in its radiance, seemed scattered about in that hilly country. The houses were placed apparently at random, as though a child had scattered them down from some nearby peak. They shone from the green of the woodlands, lay on the gay meadows, gathered in little groups here and there as if they had not been able to roll across the white road. A few stood hard by the lake and seemed to be kept from falling into it by a white fence or a group of trees. And the steamers, too, looked from afar smaller than the toy boats at Christmas. And the old, brown wooden bridge and the powder tower, above all, looked like toys, so that one was tempted to see if they were not really made of marchpane and whether the tower were not filled with sweets instead of powder.

George Gadsby sat on the low wall that bounded the hospital garden and dangled his legs over the abyss. He was utterly lost in his vision of the glimmering, sun-drenched landscape. But a deep and gnawing sadness oppressed him and the consciousness that he dared not show how

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difficult the parting would be increased that sadness to the wilderness of grief. Hastily he pulled the official paper from his pocket. It had just been handed to him. He turned it about slowly, reading his own name, the route of travel, all the various instructions and orders and jumped back into the garden with a loud curse.

At last it was decided. To-morrow his feet would be on German soil again. But what joy was there in that when it meant a return to the slavery of war, to the slavery of Stuff—a slavery that involved the issues of life and death?

Mathilde? . . . He tried to think of her. He closed his eyes to see her face better, to visualize her joy and her caress. It was all dim to him. The reality was the barracks in which his journey ended. Not until he had reported there would he have permission to return on a leave to his recovered life.

A steamer blew its whistle below and drew his glance toward the lake. Was it not madness to leave the radiance of this blessed peace and return to that careworn country that was breaking down because its conscience was the first among the consciences of the nations to awaken and to rebel, silently as yet, against the horror and the wrong of war? And he, though seeing clearly, would have to go back in silence and continue silent and patiently watch a nation repress its immitigable tears because it was still too "loyal"—that deadly universal word of doom and slavery—too "loyal" to fly at the throat of that

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mere handful of men who had led it into these tragic straits . . .

With bowed head Gadsby strode toward the gate. He seemed already to bend under the burden that awaited him. He heard some one calling his name but feigned not to hear and hastened on so as to escape. So great was his fear that some tiresome bore would join him and cross his plans that he ran for a part of the way and did not walk until he had reached the wood. They were whispering in the hospital concerning these lonely walks of his. The idea of being unmasked on the last day had little of the alluring. He was under considerable suspicion of sympathizing with the enemy even as it was. Especially among the non-commissioned officers there were men who could not forgive him because in the French prison camp he, a mere private, had been treated better than themselves. They reproached him with having lived almost like a French officer and would have been happy over the discovery that in the woods he met an interned Frenchman and carried on endless conversations with him.

High in the forest Gadsby sat down on a stone. From this point he had a view of the whole landscape as far as the railroad track. He had become accustomed to rest here until he was quite sure that no one was spying on him. He smiled at these precautions that reminded him of old times, of little love affairs which, in that goodly life in the past, had seemed so serious. Whoever watched him day after day would doubtless have

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wagered that he had an affair with a woman. Ah, adultery even would have been a small matter compared with the crime that he was committing . . . Secret meetings with an enemy. It wasn't easy to contemplate the annoyances that his secret might conceivably produce.

He had arisen and looked at his watch. But he sat down again, determined to wait another fifteen minutes. Stuff was casting his shadow before. The thought of having to meet him tomorrow increased his vigilant care. What a triumph would the fellow enjoy if Gadsby, whom he had never liked, returned as an unmasked traitor.

Quickly Gadsby took Mathilde's last letter from his pocket as if it were a talisman that could lay the evil phantoms. She wrote very hopefully. She had received a definite promise from the director of the Imperial Opera and she felt sure that his release from further military service would be procured when once he was at home again. But how did he know that the attempt would really succeed? He hadn't much confidence in such things; he wanted to spare himself an unbearable disappointment, and he could not help remembering the difficulties into which Mathilde's zeal had already plunged him. If she hadn't so tirelessly persuaded the authorities and twice traveled to Switzerland to plead for him with the medical commissioners, he would not now have been forced to return home and, perhaps, to carry his pierced lung into bat-

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tle again. That was, for the present, the only result of her activities. If she were not successful in actually obtaining his release from service for the remainder of the war, it would be her love that was actually driving him once more into all the terrors of death. Without her efforts he would still be in the wooden hut of the French prison camp. They had granted him a piano, and Ducrécy, the kindly, careless major of territorials, had quietly seen to it that he did not suffer. . . .

He, personally, had no reason not to remember that camp with kindness. He had forgotten, as one will, the murderous monotony, the thousand humiliations. Only the pleasant evenings with Ducrécy—passed with tea and music—projected into his memory from that quiet period. He saw himself sitting at the piano and saw the droll, old gentleman enthusiastically stalk through the room, beating time and often, when he waved his arms like a conductor, sweeping the glasses from the table. It had been an almost idyllic life.

Mathilde, of course, was unable to realize how well he was taken care of. She thought, quite naturally, that his pleasant generalities were meant to calm and soothe her. The censorship forbade any concrete description of his condition. And he could not blame her. For he had but to recall the first months to realize that a woman had every cause to tremble for her beloved in French captivity! With the hands of a veritable hangman the hate-maddened French

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staff surgeon had probed his wound and torn off his bandages. The attendants of both sexes had done their best to equal their commander in patriotic zeal until his vigorous organism had remained victorious and the hated boche had ceased spitting blood and was discharged. Then, like a corpse that returns to a ghastly life from the dissecting table, he had staggered and stumbled on the long march to the railroad station. A cold shiver ran down his back to this day when he remembered his transportation from the hospital to the prison camp. Trembling with cold he had sat in the quivering August heat of the railroad carriage. Bayonets stared at him from all sides. Next to him had crouched the actually bestial *maréchal des logis* who had driven the quivering skeletons under his charge out of the compartment at every station as though they had to change trains, and had done this merely for the fiendish delight of driving them in again at the end of bayonet and rifle. Of course, the pitiable creature had been maddened in the usual way. All through the journey he had read out aloud the accounts of atrocities which (according to the *Paris Matin*, of course) the boches committed against their French prisoners. On that trip Gadsby had regretted that the strength failed him to hurl himself upon the bayonet that was held to his chest without ceasing and so to end his intolerable misery. And yet he could not hate even this fanatical beast. Worthy of hatred were only those accursed ghouls of the

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press who never examined evidence, who exercised their vile imagination to produce more and more hatred, and who cared little for the poor devils of prisoners who had to pay with broken bones for the pay which those inflammatory articles brought their authors.

Below, in Lucerne, a tower clock struck the half hour between three and four and aroused Gadsby from his thoughts. Hastily he arose, searched the fields and woods with his eyes and once more and now in a calmer mood began the ascent. The farewell that was ahead of him made him review in his mind the eleven months he had spent in Switzerland. It made him also recall the day on which he had met his dear, old Ducr  cy. He remembered the terror—born of his most bitter experience—that had throbbed in his very throat when, on the second day of his stay in the prison camp, he had been summoned to the commandant. The fear of having made some thoughtless remark in his fevered and enfeebled condition seemed to rob his bloodless limbs of all power as he stood waiting in the anteroom. He had entered. And the major had asked him whether he was a relation of the famous pianist. But the question had been unnecessary. Even in that swaying skeleton the major had recognized the honored and beloved young master and would have embraced him but for the presence of the two secretaries. The old gentleman knew by heart the program of all his Parisian concerts; reminded him, with gleaming

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eyes, of many fine points in his execution and even asked him quite seriously, after a while, why he played a certain passage with wild energy now which, in 1910, he had played with slow retardation of movement. . . .

Smiling sadly Gadsby stopped on the height once more, looked back at the lake, and passed his cane across the tall grasses that trembled at the edge of the forest. He smiled again as he recalled his old friend. He had taken him into the office as interpreter and let him sleep there so that he, a private soldier, without even the iron cross, enjoyed the priceless luxury of privacy. Then had come the piano into the hut, ostensibly for the Sunday services. The tousled head of the major's wife had followed and had kept turning up in the office. And one comfort after another had been furnished the poor prisoner.

But Gadsby's smile yielded to a hard and bitter expression and he clenched his hands. For he remembered, too, how foolishly and childishly and shortsightedly he had really behaved! He, too, had been taken in by the stupid catch-word "liberty" which all governments had drilled into their citizens to enslave them but the more easily! Could he blame Mathilde for her tireless efforts when he himself, despite all the kindness which he, at least, had received, had been as full of delight as a child when his saddened old friend had announced to him his approaching liberation. How ashamed was he now when he remembered that scene. Surely, surely,

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he need have been no very deep thinker to realize that the wires and stakes of the prison-camp protected the prisoner from the deeper slavery of war. In the front trenches, when the drum fire built its roof of steel, when death hewed the quivering earth with its unchoosing fangs—how happy one would have been to flee to such a refuge as this prison camp. And but a few weeks after one's almost miraculous escape, here one was making wild plans, digging tunnels, inventing disguises, only to escape this kindly rampart that saved one from the floods of war, but which a few bayonet points turned apparently into a real prison. So blind could words make one, so blindly was one ruled by them, that the most fearful slavery loomed up as a kind of freedom if a wall or a fence prevented one from rushing into it. . . .

Gadsky turned away from the radiant landscape at his feet and went forward again amid the woodlands which grew on the ascent after the clearing had been crossed.

Of the first months of his internment in Switzerland he hated to think. He could easily, of course, had it been necessary, have freed himself from any suspicion of having had any wrong dealings with the enemy. But he had taken wine and bread and associated with the commander on social terms and played to him and his wife. And this was set down against him as a "lamentable lack of pride and self-respect." And it was probably no mere accident that in Switzerland he had

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been put directly under the non-commissioned officer who had made it his business to tell the story of his strange fraternizing with the enemy.

This sergeant, of course, had gleefully brought it home to him that here he was no more than any other private. As often as possible he commanded him to perform disagreeable and humiliating duties. But he could have borne that if only, as in the prison-camp in France, he had been able at night to withdraw to the privacy of a little wooden hut. What weighed upon him was the constant presence of uneducated, curious, unsympathetic men who made crude jokes and had no reticence. And this became all but unendurable when Mathilde arrived.

Since they were not married, there was no way of getting an official leave of absence from the barracks at night. The thought, moreover, of the men's confidentially lecherous glances made him content himself with the few daylight hours of leave which were his in the regular course of things. But the little town was so filled with gray uniforms that it was like a little garrison town in times of peace and gossip was the chief occupation. Everywhere he was quietly pointed out as the soldier lover of the famous singer!

Only in the comfortable little apartment that Mathilde had taken in the magnificent Castle Hotel could they be together undisturbed. There his blessedness, longed for a thousand times, awaited him. There he could cleanse his defiled soul in her great tenderness. And yet it was

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just these hours that he grew most to fear.

Twice only during her stay had he ventured into the hotel. Even in the foyer a darkness fell upon his eyes. For the place swarmed with German guests—with people whom the war had enriched and with a few who had somehow been released from military service. And the cruel contrast between these people and himself smote upon his heart. They had rights which were not his; they had freedom and human dignity; they were the slaves of no machine, of no petty tyrannies. But he, who, from the conventional point of view, had suffered everything for the fatherland, who had almost lost his life, who had endured the extreme cruelty of the enemy, who had forever burdened his soul with the slaying of men—he who was in himself a man of distinction and an adornment to his country, had not the rights of these profiteers and slackers, but was penned at night in a stall with riff-raff and had to keep his eye on his watch when he was with the woman whom he loved. The indignation that this caused him blended with the irritation of his overwrought nerves to such an extent that he knew in retrospect that his behavior to Mathilde had ill repaid her for her impassioned and tireless and devoted love. And to-day a chill came over him at the thought of the scenes which he, or rather his sick nerves and his wounded sense of justice, had caused her. And yet, although he saw it all clearly now and swore to make it up to her in the future in redoubled

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tenderness and delicacy, yet no feeling of genuine remorse arose in him. For he sternly recognized the unescapable fact that her presence had emphasized and raised into the most glaring light the loss of liberty and human dignity to which he was condemned because he had served his country and because he was still a member of its armed forces. Had not the Swiss surgeons freed him from this situation by declaring his lungs not yet perfectly healed and his right hand in need of electro-therapeutic treatment, he would, at that early period of his internment, have taken his own life.

He had been so absorbed in his own thoughts that he had walked on until, of their own accord, his limbs stopped at the edge of the little upland meadow that had been for weeks the meeting-place of his strange encounters. When he looked up he saw the anxious face of his friend behind the trunk of a tree. The face was anxious because Gadsby had evidently been talking to himself and Merlier had begun to fear that he was not alone. They laughed over the little misunderstanding and shook hands warmly. Then the Frenchman threw a deep, questioning glance at Gadsby and said hesitatingly: "So this is our farewell?"

Gadsby nodded silently. His heart, too, grew heavy as he regarded the pale, sincere face that had been his joy and his consolation here. It would disappear from him now. And how little chance had they of ever meeting again! Silently

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they sat down on their accustomed tree stumps and stared down at the lake and the city until Merlier laid his hand on the shoulder of his friend and said in his droll, delicately pronounced German: "This is the fiftieth time that we are meeting here."

Gadsky smiled sadly. Wasn't it strange how their national parts were exchanged. Merlier was the exact one who noted everything, remembered everything and had entered their conversations in his diary night after night. And what had they not discussed?

An uncanny sense of spiritual emptiness came over Gadsky when he considered that these meetings and conversations were at an end for all time. Where would he find a substitute? Poor Weiler was still in the asylum; Krülow was listed as "missing." All of his friends that he really cared for were dead or in enemy prisons. The little Frenchman had become indispensable to him. When he sat there and noticed how the greenish gray of his own uniform contrasted so ill with the horizon blue of his friend's, when he considered how the very colors of their garments seemed at war, he was still constantly astonished at the certainty with which fate, through the harmony of their two minds, had brought them together despite all the anger and terror with which their masters would have pursued them had they known. And they had been safe so far. A single unfortunate meeting with some one would have spread the scandal of their friendship

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among the French as well as among the Germans in the town. But nothing had happened.

When he had first arrived in Lucerne an almost physical nausea had overcome him at the sight of the swarming blue uniforms in the railroad station. For these uniforms were inseparable in his mind and nerves now from the hoarse croaking of the "Marseillaise" in hand-to-hand fighting, from moans and dirt and cruel suffering. As often as he met a French soldier he could almost feel the tingle of the enslaving bayonet of the prison master against his side. But his unforgettable experience with Merlier had definitely freed him of that unhappy feeling.

It had happened on the first Sunday of his stay in Lucerne—a magnificent day, fragrant with spring. Under the roof of the early foliage of the great promenade people were happily walking, freed from the heaviness of their winter wrappings. The uniforms gleamed among the civilians like crocuses on a meadow. The band, almost nervous in its careful neutrality, followed up the Pilgrims' Chorus from Tannhäuser by an overture of Boildieu. The public, equally neutral, applauded both exactly alike. German, French, English and Swiss soldiers strolled by. Every one was talkative and care-free and so well rested and happy that one might have thought oneself on a different planet.

He, too, had walked there, lighter of body and of mind and filled with a sense of regal independence. He had just been trying to squeeze past a

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group of chattering girls when there bobbed up, unexpectedly and from the opposite direction, a little French infantryman. He tried to step aside, collided with the whirl of white frocks and was somewhat ungently pushed against the Frenchman. Automatically he saluted and uttered the ordinary formula of courtesy. At the same moment he was aware of the same gesture on the part of the sky-blue enemy and heard the latter speak the identical words. He walked on a few paces, involuntarily swung around and caught the Frenchman doing the same thing. Their eyes met and a spark sprang from man to man that illuminated once more the crass stupidity of the whole bloody game. Their tribal consciences drove them swiftly apart that day. But their friendship was an established fact. Daily they exchanged swift, furtive glances and when, on Corpus Christi day, they happened to meet in this isolated spot, their cordial greeting of each other was quite instinctive. They were in reality old friends, for they had read the same books, admired the same pictures, loved the same composers long before they had met. They could begin their conversation where each had interrupted it with his like-minded comrades in internment. And just as Europeans in a far country will often pass whole days in the saddle for an hour's talk with a man of their own kind, so these two had met in this hidden corner as often as possible and their farewell was not an easy one.

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Once more they walked through the house of their friendship room by room and listened to the echo that each had awakened in the other's soul.

The sun was sinking behind the great mountain; the air quivered as with dust of gold and strewn the distant peaks with a heavy glow. The lake lay like a dim mirror. To the left the Rigi towered from among its tufted cloudlets, rosy-peaked against the sky and falling like a mantle of precious stuff into the water's pastel blue. Merlier's hand drew a nervous circle in the air as though he meant to include in this gesture all the glory and peace that lay before them. "And it is still war? Can you believe it? Still war!" A quiet despair was in his voice.

Gadsky nodded gravely. "Up in the wretched mountain village that thought tormented me too. I had a secret place, a projecting ledge of rock and often there at sunset I was forced to imagine how, beyond the mountains, the shells were still screaming and men were still tearing each other like wild beasts, instead of going in peace into their houses and lighting their evening lamps. But up there such thoughts were harder to bear than here. Because that village had really grown up within a few years, because the physicians thought that precisely this spot had an extraordinary healing power. And so the railroad had been brought here to transport to a year or two of life, people who, in the valleys, would have died within a few months or even weeks! And for that work of mercy tun-

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nels had been bored and tracks laid and billions of money expended! And beyond the mountains crawled the endless wagon trains, rattled the cranes, and millions of arms worked and the strength of whole nations was poured out in order to reduce the lives of healthy men to a few hours of blood-soaked torment. At first the contrast maddened me so that I could have run out into the village like a herald of doom. But in time I grew calmer. And every evening, at twilight, the great square would be filled with an international crowd waiting for news from the seat of war. And each side, if the other had suffered a defeat, broke out in loud jubilation. And these Frenchmen and Germans, remember, were not parlor strategists who were ignorant of pain and horror. Not one man there who had not been saved as by a miracle, few who did not shriek with horror in their dreams from the poison of their memories. Yet each group had a good time counting up the enemy's prisoners, wounded and dead, as though it were a business transaction. It is hard, I tell you, to pity man. For no animal can be so ferocious. The beasts slay only from hunger and then but rarely members of their own species. Man alone is capable of that joy in the hurt of others, and in inflicting upon others what he most dreads for himself. Since he can be frank, since the pretense of considerateness and kindness has become unnecessary—that is, since 1914—one can measure the whole force of his evil instincts. If before the

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war a great scientist had arisen and declared himself capable of rooting out all the suffering in the world, the scourge of all diseases, but had required for the preparation of his great medicine one month of such sacrifices as the nations have made for dozens of months—I assure you that the world would have remained as it was. The nations would not have endured one week of such suffering for a noble cause. Ah, my dear friend, you're young and you cling to your belief in humanity! Ten years from now you'll stop fishing with ideas for souls. Men cannot be stirred unless you appeal to their bellies or their vanity. Whoever doesn't come to see that in time, will crash his head into stone walls."

Merlier shook his head slowly. He looked at the mountains and the sunset and spoke slowly, as though his answer were written in the sky and were difficult to decipher. "No, I won't believe that ten years from now either. And you will recant long before the ten years are gone. For don't you see that there is really progress from century to century? Why, at the beginning of the war, did every State find it necessary to proclaim that it had been attacked? Two hundred years ago each would have said quite frankly: We're going out to kill our neighbors because they have coast cities or iron mines or over-sea trade or fine ships that we could well use! Why did each government, even that of the United States in the end, persuade its soldiers that they were defending their own homes and

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hearths! No government dared to say to its men: If you win you will make more money, eat more, wear handsomer clothes, all at the expense of the enemy whom you must first, however, defeat and humiliate before you can rob him! But no one dared to ask common men to fight for booty—no one! You can no longer wage a predatory war in the West without hiding your evil purpose from the people behind a veil of fine phrases. Isn't that in itself splendid? Doesn't it show that all we need do is to tear asunder that veil of phrases in order to save the world? If you must feign a noble cause to lead men into drumfire, to fight and to die, how can you doubt their power to sacrifice and endure if you were to substitute a truly noble cause for lies and crimes?"

Gadsky smiled silently. He loved to hear Merlier speak. His gentle German pronunciation with its rolling consonants sounded delightful for its tinge of dialect. Merlier had gone to school in Berlin up to his fourteenth year. His father had been a teacher of French there. And it was a daily pleasure to Gadsky to hear a French infantryman use some inimitably Berlinese locution. Then, too, Merlier was so charmingly young and so full of flaming enthusiasm and Gadsky hated to rob him of his faith. But after a long pause he ventured: "Perhaps your countrymen are more capable of enthusiasm than mine. And they did once bleed for the rights of man, although I suspect that even then hunger

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played a greater rôle than ideals. But you cannot judge an alien folk. . . ."

Merlier interrupted him swiftly. "There is no such thing as an alien folk. There is only mankind! Only the languages differ and evil men and forces exploit that difference. Look at the two of us! Are we not infinitely closer to each other than each is to the majority of his compatriots? And your peasant lads would find ours far more congenial than they would find you. They could talk about their harvests and their cattle just as you and I discuss literature and music. They belong together just as you and I belong together and they would realize that if there were honest interpreters to guide them. Remember that the artificial differences that lead to war have diminished through the ages. Once neighboring cities made war on each other until highways united them into counties. Then steam and electricity created the great powers of to-day. The next war, if there is to be one, will be between continents—Asia, perhaps, against the West. And at last the world will be one and the love of man will take the place of patriotism. You smile? Didn't Christ proclaim that two thousand years ago? Did not every great modern State have to erect monuments, force children to sing patriotic songs in the public schools, introduce more or less universal military service, and fill its prisons with radicals and objectors in order to stem this tide of development? It won't last much longer. Suddenly

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the great turning-point will have been reached. You and I will both live to see it."

Gadsky sighed. He remembered his debates with Weiler and with Krülow and looked with deep emotion into Merlier's face. They were all alike, these dear dreamers and idealists. In their thoughts they built up the world of their desires and confused their yearning for it with a possible reality.

"There is one thing, dear Merlier, that you forget," he said. "In spite of the long duration of the war, it is only a certain fraction of humanity that is feeling its horrors in its own flesh and blood. You mustn't imagine that the war is to all our contemporaries a terrible blood bath, a reversion into bestiality, a crime that must not be repeated. You forget that in every country there are behind the wall of warriors who bleed, the great armies of munition makers whose wages are magnificent. You forget the merchants, the manufacturers, the farmers and the officers of higher rank—all that great host that makes money or reputation out of every button that we wear. The twenty millions of actual fighting men are the wares that are carried to market. The chafferers in the rear try to squeeze the last drop of profit out of this rare opportunity. I grant you that the poor devils upon whom rests the actual weight of the war would be a grateful soil for the seed of your ideas. But too many of them will be, when it is all over, literally a part of the soil. And it is possible—

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though I hope I am wrong—that the survivors, especially the victors, whoever they be, will not care to add new miseries to those they have barely escaped. And the evil in the world will not fall without a struggle. For those who will have profited from this vast woe, again especially in the victorious countries, will be so famous and so rich and will defend their war, their great and profitable war, far more passionately than any man has ever defended his fatherland or his ideals.” He drew a newspaper from his pocket. “If you read the papers you must see with how precise an aim more and more hatred is always concentrated on Germany. In Germany itself, to be sure, since the dream of rapid victory vanished, those in power know quite well that their methods are losing in popularity every day and that the idle talk concerning disarmament and the family of man is really rising to the dignity of an earnest yearning and a mighty wave of action. And yet, if, when it’s all over, there were to be found everywhere a great mass of men who desired a new order in which each nation should leave the other what it has, in order to preserve its own—what whispers and warnings would be sounded, what inferences drawn from the artificial stimulation of hate? Men would be told in each country in turn: ‘Ah, well and good, if the others were like you. But while you’re nursing your fine dreams the hungry wolves across the frontier are sharpening their claws and teeth.’ It’s all arranged in the

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most sophisticated and intricate way. You can't govern a mechanism like that with ideas and feelings. While we philosophize here, those masters drive the nations into slavery and sow the seeds of hatred so deeply, and water the soil of hatred so plentifully with blood, that their great machine will be in no permanent danger of standing idle. Behind both fronts stand the merchants who are equally interested in their wares of human flesh and equally careful to nurse all methods that will keep the trade from dying out. And this trade has been carried on by these same methods since the beginnings of history . . ."

"And has now met its doom!" Merlier interrupted triumphantly. "The great machine doesn't function perfectly any more. The stuff it weaves comes threadbare from the shuttle. Hold it against the light and the truth shines through. As long as three years ago—think of that!—an illiterate cowherd from the Ardennes to whom I had to read bits from the paper in our dugout, because he couldn't read, said to me that when he heard the rot of the scribblers for the papers it seemed to him as if he had a vision of two men at fisticuffs, each trying to knock the other's teeth down his throat and tear out his hair and each howling out: 'I'll show you that I'm the finer, more cultured and better of us two! There's another crack at your jaw. Do you believe now that I'm gentler, more unselfish and more Christian than you?' And that was a mere cowherd. Men aren't as stupid as you

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think. They will surprise the masters very soon."

Gadsky shrugged his shoulders. He couldn't conquer his old dislike of the common people. He had lived with them in the barracks. "That was a good deal for a cowherd to realize," he said drily. "In Germany, as you know, things are different. Every one can read and reads that things are very well as they are. And I do not deny that the State gave the people much—good dwellings, hospitals, insurance against old age and illness, free medical treatment, excellent wages. Who was better taken care of than the German? Who read better books, saw better plays, heard better music? No one. And so political energy and thoughtfulness, such as even your dissatisfied cowherd may have had, was lulled to rest. And I almost fear that those qualities which were not apparently needed before the war are now in part atrophied. And so the great slaughter can go on. For the men believe that they are fighting to defend advantages which were perfectly real from enemies who wish to crush them. If the revolution does come in Germany, it will therefore entail a more tremendous inner change than it would in any other land, a more profound shaking up of all the spiritual foundations. For the people believed that all their prosperity and civilization was a gift of 1870, a gift of war, rather than the expansion of national qualities in a new age. And so these men are both the freest and, in a special

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and narrow sense, the most enslaved of all."

Merlier had jumped up and walked up and down before Gadsby. "And how is it with us? The poor among us live as you Germans would not permit a dog to live. They have dirty hospitals and no free baths and are fed with so-called political rights—which is cheaper, no doubt. It is much worse that the common, daily life of our people has been stripped for a festive garment, a symbol of liberty that hangs in the show-window with gold-embroidery hiding the moth holes. And with this gilded sham we've deceived the men across our frontiers into thinking that we possess something of which we haven't, in reality, a shred. It was a viler deception than yours. . . ."

"No," Gadsby said calmly; "it was not. Your people are hungry and hungry people have a chance of knowing that they are cheated and may one day smash up the whole evil trade. Ours were fed and well fed and I am afraid. . . ."

Merlier stopped and nodded at Gadsby with a smile. "There we are at our old trick of defending each other's country and being in all likelihood uncharitable to our own because we have a keener sense of its shortcomings. How simple everything would be if men would only be a bit more rational. You have, I remember, a neat proverb to the effect that every man should be careful to keep just his own threshold clean. The war could end to-day if both sides would heed that simple wisdom as you and I do. I abuse

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France because I know her faults, you abuse Germany because you feel her faults to be a part of your human responsibility. Unfortunately, most men fail to cure the ills they have and console themselves with the fact that their neighbor suffers from worse ones. When I tell my comrades concerning the sins of our chauvinists and imperialists, they yell at me: '*Et les boches?*' You have had a similar experience among your comrades, of course. In simpler days it never occurred to a pickpocket to defend his trade because there were probably murderers and burglars in the world. To-day all the nations have grown so modest that each is quite satisfied if it can only believe itself less base than the enemy." He fell silent for a moment. Then he threw his arms into the air and said: "And they must all become good—all!"

Gadsky, too, had slowly arisen and stepped to the edge of the little meadow. Sadly he surveyed the radiant scene below him. The passionate cry of Merlier brought to his face a weary and indulgent smile. "Perhaps they will all become good and just and even unselfish and love their neighbor as themselves, even when he wears a different raiment and speaks another tongue! Perhaps! They have even now been trained to restrain their envy of a competitor around the corner, and no longer murder a fellow tribesman because his wheat is taller than theirs or his cattle more fecund. So why shouldn't they learn to endure the prosperity of those whom they do

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not even see? The only question is: Will they be ordered to feel and act so? For I am convinced that the redemption of men will not come from among themselves. Ah, if I could only share the trust that you idealists have in the poor and the disinherited! But they have never yet been freed by their own will and power. They have always clung to their masters and crucified their saviors. All liberty has been handed them from above as completely prepared and wrapped as a Christmas gift. Serfdom in Europe was abolished not because the peasants came with scythes and pitchforks, but because the conscience of the masters could no longer endure treating men like beasts. The Jews did not emerge from their ghettos until a few free and strong men helped them pull down the walls. The negro slaves of North America were liberated because the dominant Europeans suffered so in their conscience that they—and not the oppressed negroes—fought for them during four years. The Count de Mirabeau did more for your famous revolution than ten thousand sansculottes. And so it will come this time if the change is to be permanent. Not till the rich man can bear no meat that tastes of the sweat of helots, not till kings and prime ministers and generals are revolted by the blood that stains their laurels—not until then can that become concrete reality of which you and others like you dream. Why will you waste your strength? If you would be heard you must address the head and not the feet.”

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Merlier faced Gadsby with a smile of victory and said triumphantly: "You speak of 'above' and 'below' as though these represented unchangeable concepts like North and South. What is 'above'? It is that which men aim at—the height that man would reach. Transfer that goal of desire to the valley and your 'below' has become an 'above.' The trouble hitherto has been that the weak and the poor have themselves been so greatly in love with power and wealth. That is what we must change and therefore we turn to the lowly. It is they who have made the head—say rather the stomach and the purse—what it is by their desire and envy of it. The false prophets have had an easy time so far. It was enough to lead them to the window of a luxurious restaurant and show them the rich eating pheasants and drinking champagne. Why waste one's words, or struggle for souls, or dig to the ultimate evil, when that simple process gained you the discipleship of all the hungry? You simply said to them: 'Those people are growing fat on your labor while you starve. Follow me and you will sit in there feasting while their faces will be pale against the panes! So any man could become a leader and was really doing the work of the rich whom he feigned to attack. For it was thus that arose the false glamor of money that blinds the conscience of men. The people in the restaurant were naturally confirmed in their belief that they had achieved something desirable when every bite

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they took was accompanied by the envy of a multitude. How should their shame grow articulate when the slaves desired only to sit in their seats and act likewise? People chatter a lot of nonsense to the effect that the morality current within a social group should be transferred to international relations and that thus war would become impossible. As if, in ordinary civil life, anything had ever counted but victory! Whoever wanted to be respected by all men and live a goodly life was in some way responsible for the enslavement of his workmen, his clients or his customers. He had to make money out of the needs of others, to make such a peace with his beaten enemies or competitors as would serve only his interests and which had to be upheld by force. In a word, he acted precisely as the State does. Everywhere hitherto the strong man had all rights, the weak man all duties; everywhere pride flourished and not a consciousness of guilt, envy instead of contempt. If, therefore, we succeed in changing the soul of the individual, so that he becomes ashamed of his self-seeking even when it is profitable, the States will follow suit and the world will be saved. And we must succeed—we must! Ah, you may smile! But don't you see how little is needed to blow down this house of cards which is held together even now only by a relentless exercise of force? You said yourself a while ago that one must appeal to people's appetite or to their vanity to influence them. Well, we will use their

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vanity. The single abusive word 'slacker' has power enough within the present order to turn the most arrant cowards into men who will endure the extremest danger and pain. Do you believe that other words will be less potent when they carry an equally dishonorable implication? Will it be harder to force men to magnanimity and sympathy than it is now to force them to risk pain and despise death? Take our French duelists and your German fraternity students with their scratched faces and transport them both to England where dueling is seriously in disrepute. They'll try to satisfy their vanity in other ways, to be sure. But they assuredly won't pick quarrels of so-called technical honor. Human vanity is like a mighty locomotive that is always under steam but that can just as easily do useful work on the tracks and in the station as it can smash walls and kill men. It all depends on the direction of the tracks and the position of the switch. Bring it about that every one who gorges himself on the hunger of others is despised, that every one—a State or an individual—is ostracized and contemned if he casts down the weak instead of lifting him up—accomplish this, and wealth will lose its glamor and attraction and the nations be ashamed of their victories of force. And that's the way we're going to turn the switch now. And you will have to help, too. Every man must help in his own country, for every country is in equal need. But it will be much easier than most people believe."

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Gadsky was touched by the fine light in his friend's eyes. He laid his hand on Merlier's shoulder and said gently: "I shall gladly be one of your apostles even though I cannot share your faith. I am afraid that nothing was so ill fitted to turn humanity to new paths as this very war, which has raised self-seeking to new heights and will, in the case of the ultimate victors, heighten it to the point of utter madness. How can . . ."

"For that very reason," Merlier cried, and stretched out his arms as though he would embrace the world. "Have not these four years taught every nation and every individual that you cannot seek to enslave others without robbing yourself of all freedom? Is it not clear by this time that you cannot rob your neighbor and not live thereafter booted and spurred and with your rifle in your very bed? Thrice within fifty years your countrymen won an easy victory, and that was bad for them and it was also bad that an increase of prosperity followed each victory and seemed, at least, to spring from it. But now both they and the rest of the world must at last be persuaded that the game is not worth the candle. There was a time when the Germans were ahead of us all; they had found their souls at a time when we still worshiped force and were swollen with pride each time that we broke the back of some weaker people. Then we reached the point of satiation and the truth might perhaps have dawned on our full stomachs. But, alas, Germany was not satiated. Germany was

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still hungry as we had been in older days. And in her there awakened the hunger which we had already satisfied. And in that contrast lies the source of the unreasoning and stupid hatred that has hurt your people so tragically. But though your national claims are not unjust, the hour to enforce them as we always enforced ours has gone by—I trust that it has gone by. Much will depend upon the peace when it comes—much! If it is an evil peace, Germany will be justified not in her best but in her worst motives and actions. If it is a good peace she will be cleansed and we shall be cleansed with her. Ah, all this blood cannot, cannot have been shed in vain! The peace must be just and good and things must return to their finest level. Always we have given our ideas to Germany to nurse for us, as we give our children in France to strong and sane people in the country and do not ask them back until they themselves are strong and sane. And like a faithful nurse, Germany developed all our ideas, whether they consisted of a new motor or of a philosophical system. And so it will be again. In our delight over our liberation from our nobles we have given ourselves up defenselessly to the scorpions of capitalism. And we have nothing left, of the rights of man for which we once fought but conscription, which once upon a time we assumed gladly as a means of self-defense! Your countrymen, solid and thorough as they are, have taken the opposite course—they began by cultivating their duties and will

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now arise to defend their rights. And the hands which are now lonely—yours and ours—will find each other. For there is one language that is spoken in all the world. The starving Hindoo coolie understands it as well as the men who, deserted by all but death, have lain opposite each other—it is the language of pain and the language of the soul that rebels against the injustice that it has suffered. And all nations have been imprisoned behind boundaries and given uniform varnishes and have been egged on against each other, and have been caught in nets of ostensible duties and honors in order that that universal speech might be silenced. But that is over! But for that very reason the suffering had to be so unendurably monstrous in order that all the fetters might snap like paper thread! The whole world is in labor and is bearing the rights of man that have been in her womb for two hundred years and are now to see the light completely formed for all time. Be sure of that!”

His pleasant young voice shook. He was unmanned by the depth of his own faith. He turned away and held out his hand to Gadsby.

Gadsby took the hand in both of his. Moved beyond his wont and with a sigh he said: “Let us hope so!”

Behind the mountains the sun showed its ultimate splendor and laid a bar of gold upon the ridges. All the colors of the scene flamed up once more as though nature itself was for a mo-

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ment radiant with the hopes that lived in Merlier's eyes.

Gadsky remembered a picture, a poor lithograph that he had seen somewhere in the corridor of an inn. It was called "The Covenant of Grütli." It showed a mountain meadow flooded by sun or moonlight and three quaint old men with flowing beards who raised their hands in solemn affirmation. Thus had the Swiss Republic been founded. And was not the peace that filled this evening scene, was not this whole blessed land which, in the midst of a world's rage and hate, alone held human life a holy thing—was it not rooted in that ancient oath?

He looked at Merlier, saw his own gray sleeve melt into his friend's blue one and repeated, putting all his heart into the words: "Let us hope so!"

A gray and ugly day showed through the rain-swept panes as the train pulled out of the station at Lucerne. The crowded carriage smelled of damp garments and wilted flowers; the leaden heaviness of the morning lay in all limbs and the convulsive merriment, the exaggerated mood that whirled about him heightened Gadsky's discouraged sadness to an aggressive irritation which he found it difficult to suppress. The crude jests, the loud laughter were like blows to him. Why did these men act as though a fine dream of theirs were approaching its fulfillment, as though they had really been eager to be trans-

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ported back to their own country which, as things were, would mean again the barracks and drill and, in the end, the trenches? Had he not seen them await the decision full of dread? Only two elderly men who yearned for their families had reported voluntarily when first the question of a possible exchange of prisoners had come up in the hospital. Whence did the others take the courage to act as merrily now as though they had never confessed their true and secret feelings to each other? Was it, or was it not, an empty pretense? . . . Could the two weeks' leave, the short period of grace that would be granted them, make them blind to all the horrors that awaited them as behind a screen of gaudy paper?

Gadsky listened to the rhythmic thumping of the wheels, stared out into the dripping landscape, sought in vain not to hear the words and cries that reminded him of school children returning home. He would like to have had his friends here—Weiler, for instance, or that mysterious stretcher-bearer! They would, of course, have defended this dull, patient, murderous crowd against all his accusations! What did these innocent souls really hope for? What fortified their unshakable faith in the "people"? And had not Merliër, too, no longer ago than the day before, spoken with deep conviction of the awakening of these sleepers, spoken exactly as Weiler would have done? Were his friends blind? Did not one glance into this carriage suffice to cure one forever of such dreams?

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"Awakening?" "A new vanity?" What force would be strong enough to change the aim and direction of these lives, since even the experiences of the war had been obliterated, leaving no trace, by the prospect of a two weeks' vacation at home?

But as his eyes searched the men before him his anger changed to honest envy. A careless and sincere happiness which could not be merely assumed gleamed from all faces. Yet they all brought home the same memories; all had sworn a hundred times that no power on earth could force them back into the slaughter! Every one who sat here would have cried out in horror and rage if in the field or in foreign captivity a prophet had told him that a two weeks' leave of absence would make him subservient once more to the machine of war. There was not one man in the whole train who had not an hundred times clenched his fists, murmured dark oaths of vengeance, spoken somber and secret words even in Switzerland against the shamelessness of those on the press and behind it who released anew the indignation of the civilian populations and sought to hide the facts of the war behind a veil of rhetoric. They had likened this to the drum-taps which accompany a man to execution. There was not one here who, in this return home, was not acting the traitor to his own soul and to all his comrades. Not one seemed to remember his sacred promise to speak out and spread the truth if ever, as the phrase went, he got home once more!

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Oh, how gladly he would have leaped up and hurled that sentence back at those who had repeated it so many thousand times. He could have taken each individual by the shoulder and struck him for his base forgetfulness. His nails sank into his own flesh, so great was his suffering under this assault of false and empty noise.

He closed his eyes and all that he had suffered in the past two years traveled through his soul. He saw Weiler foaming at the mouth, strapped to the stretcher, he saw the disemboweled body of Fröbel, the crashed-in face of the Jew; he heard the captain cry out like a tortured animal as the skin flapped over his eye. He looked at his own hands and felt the great, crimson welt on his chest and thought of the little Frenchman with the timid mustache, the first brother man whom he had slain. And finally he felt a dim compassion for himself too, at the recollection of his passive martyrdom in the French hospital and on that terrible transport train where a raw beast played with him as though he were a captured insect.

And all these things had suddenly lost their significance and were supposed to fade into nothingness before the insignia on the collar of Sergeant Xavier Stuff!

The thought ate into him like fire. Every fiber of his body rebelled against the injustice. He could see himself in the barracks, standing at attention, condescendingly greeted by the sergeant who might let him wait at the door, who

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could conceivably insult him or even place him under arrest as though nothing had happened within the two years! The nameless bitterness which Mathilde's first visit had aroused in him broke out in him again, throttled him and made him resolve not to submit, not to be put off with two weeks like the others!

Night after night Stuff had lain in his comfortable bed beside his large spouse. Now the man could rule him again! No! If no one else had any piety toward his own torments—he would set them an example! He would speak out the words that he had sworn to speak when death was his chief witness. It was well that he had, first of all, to report at the barracks to wait on Sergeant Stuff. It would serve to harden his purpose. No beseeching of Mathilde would deter him. They could all keep their indulgence for the slackers and the released. He wanted no favor. He needed justice!

He would raise his pierced lung and his whitening temples like a banner for all the world to see! He would proclaim the truth that he who came home broken and patched need not bow down to any one, but could demand the respect of those who had been fed and warmed far from all danger, even though braids and stars, even though diamonds adorned their uniforms.

And he would refuse his release from further service! He would reject any exceptional treatment! He desired for himself only what every man should demand. And it was this—that no

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one should be sent twice into the firing-line, that no one should sweat the bloody sweat twice so long as there were men in the land who, under whatever pretext, had not yet staked their lives nor put the burden of slaughter on their souls.

This fight he would fight to the finish—come what might. He threw back his head proudly, uplifted by his resolve. And then he looked about frightened, as though awakening from a deep dream. For he had been but dimly aware in the midst of his thoughts of the detrainment and the boarding of the steamer. But he was already on its deck and about him were the waters of Lake Constance and the Swiss shore was softly receding and from the mast fluttered the imperial flag.

He hastened forward where the crowding was not so great and tried to remember how he had come here. Dimly, as though years lay between, the images arose before him—the thrusting and pushing, the examination of his papers, the puddles into which, tottering under one's heavy luggage, one was propelled. Then laughter and the thundering of many heavy heels on a bridge. He could hardly believe that all this had happened.

Lake Constance!

A dust-like rain swept against his face. The ship plowed its way into the grayish wall of fog that still kept the German shore from view.

He remembered his last trip across the lake. Where the army packs towered, the leather trav-

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eling bags had lain. And when the shore appeared, a charming little Viennese lady had begun to cry because she had to return to St. Moritz. Dear God, how easy life had been once upon a time. . . .

He stepped to the railing to take his leave of Switzerland. But the shore had disappeared. The steamer was wrapped round by the fog as by wet clothes. He could see only the side-wheel shovel the water into foam and the banner on the masthead.

Gadsky wanted to sit down but the crowd was surging forward. In the other direction there was no longer anything to see. Soon it was impossible to move. Each wanted to be the first to see the shore of the fatherland emerge from the fog. Round about him bottles were opened and men who had not seen each other since the occasion of their capture celebrated this meeting with delight. A giant of the Cameroon territorials recognized his father in the person of a wrinkled little reservist; an officer from the upper deck nodded with kind condescension to where, amid the crowd, he recognized one of his recruits and called to him by name. Joy radiated from all faces as though these men were really returning to liberty or to their fatherland in its normal and noble sense.

Gadsky looked in vain for some breach in the human wall about him. What was that? He swung around. But his name had been called. It was too late for escape. It was the sergeant

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who had reported the Ducrécy episode and had then pursued him with his small maliciousness until his transfer to Lucerne had put an end to that. He approached Gadsby with a grin and jeered in his ugly cracked voice: "You don't look very happy! I suppose you'd rather go back to the French prison camp hobnobbing with the fat major?"

Gadsby didn't answer. He stood at attention, annoyed, as of old, by the mechanical functioning of his muscles at the sight of a sergeant's coat. It recalled Stuff, who had trained him so perfectly.

"Of course, you won't be such a big man in the army as you were with those French people!" the sergeant continued, and his bony face glowed with malicious pleasure. "Where are you stationed, anyhow?"

Gadsby coldly named the city and returned the gaze of the evil, little eyes. They were bound for the same place. He knew that from the prison-camp, where he had had charge of the mail. The thought flamed up in him at once that this vengeful creature would blacken his character to Stuff.

He trembled at the danger of further questions, and breathed a sigh of relief when the man finally returned to the group of his friends with a condescending inclination of the head. His release from further service couldn't be accomplished in a day or even a week, no matter what influences Mathilde had set in motion. It only

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needed the evil accident of this man's meeting Stuff to give the latter as well as his superiors the necessary military pretext to refuse.

Was he afraid? Surely not! He had no reason to cringe! He could have beaten his own body for harboring this unworthy fear. What was the gossip of two sergeants to him. He came from captivity. Deep scars were on his body. He would not forget that again!

He tried, with the utmost determination, to make his way through the crowd. But the path led by a group of non-commissioned officers; he would have actually to brush the detestable sergeant with his sleeve. And just as he had nearly succeeded in getting past, a merry group came from the opposite direction and forced him into the circle he desired most to avoid.

"I'll ask to be assigned to a camp of French prisoners," he heard one of the men say. "And the fellows that I get hold of won't have a picnic, believe me. For eighteen bloody months their countrymen wiped their heels on me. I'll knock the hell out of 'em!"

He didn't stop to hear more. A darkness had descended on his eyes, a nausea had arisen from his stomach. Here was the spirit of the war, the universal spirit of the war. Hope was folly. Regardless he shoved aside all who blocked his way, careless of the angry words that pursued him, fought his way through and reached the other end of the ship. He was covered with sweat. But it was quieter here. There were only small groups here—gray-haired men of the

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last line of reserves, cripples with crutches, and under the fluttering flag, huddled in traveling robes, the terrible wreck of a man in a wheel-chair.

Gadsky stood bending out over the railing and stared into the pearly wake left by the steamer. He thought of Merlier. . . . These were the people whom he wanted to awaken to goodness. These were the carriers of a new future! Because they knew from their own sufferings how hard a lot it is to be defenseless in the hands of hostile men, they desired to inflict the same fate on others. Not even their own pain could make them merciful to another's. And if these bitter memories had no power over their hearts, what words could ever win them? How could another's martyrdom inspire them? How could a brave man's example spur them on? How could ideas that no one was able to impress on them become their motives?

"Right!" . . . "Human dignity!" . . . Gadsky laughed a sarcastic laugh and looked suspiciously at the men behind him who were carrying on a loud conversation. A broad-shouldered marine, smoking a pipe, was talking condescendingly to the crew of the lake steamer. And these inland sailors looked reverently up at the sailor of the deep seas and shook their heads in awe and wonder.

Gadsky heard fragments of their talk—mere fragments, but the words "prisoners of war" and "war-captivity" clung to his mind and suddenly assumed a strange and different and

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ghastly reasonableness of sound and meaning.

"Prisoner of war!" He turned the word about as though it were a rare coin. Did that mean: Imprisoned *by* the war? Then he was surely on the way back to that fateful captivity and not returning from it!

The ship was sailing straight into the war. Hidden behind the fog was the unspeakable maw of the war which would crunch him between its grinders the moment he set foot on land.

"Prisoner of war!" A single sentence from the conversation he had held with Merlier twenty-four hours earlier would almost suffice to bring him to the gallows in that captivity of war to which he was going. For wherever war is, thought is slain. War in all lands has to make its captives dumb and blind. A thinking army has no morale. He would have to choke in intolerable silence. There would be silence in the barracks, silence on the street, silence wherever strange ears could overhear. . . .

"Prisoner of war!"

With wild eyes he looked about him. He saw the men lift up their packs and storm forward. Mechanically he shouldered his own pack too and fastened the straps and felt his knees tremble under the weight, so weak had he grown.

"Prisoner of war!" The words would not let him go. Was he not mad to risk that captivity once again?

From forward a singing came to his ears and loud hurrahs and cries of joy. Germany? . . . He bent far over to see, and his head was as

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heavy as a stone. As with grappling irons the words "prisoner of war" had hooked themselves into his brain—and seemed to weigh him down even as the song rose higher and higher.

It seemed to him as though on the approaching gangplank he could see the crimson face of Stuff contorted into a grin of fiendish delight. Triumphantly the man was awaiting his prisoner of war and carrying clanking chains for his limbs and mind. A few minutes more and the chains would be used. . . . Whither could one flee? . . .

He had a vision of himself caught in the chains and driven along by Stuff under the lashes of a whip! And round about stood people and laughed. A short, hoarse moan came from him. He wanted to open his tunic and show his deep, deep scar. Then he let his arms sink. It was all nonsense. Mathilde might even now have procured his definite release. . . .

No! He must save himself! A cry for help stuck in his throat. But he knew with a mad certainty that he could not land, that he could not return to the captivity of war, to Stuff and the chains. . . . He must not, whatever the cost. . . .

Music struck on his ear. The foghorn blew its blast. And he saw the prison open, saw it arise from the fog in its might! And the fog hung so deep that it hid the hills of his fatherland from his sight and also the tops of the trees, so that only their trunks showed like the serried bars of a huge cage. . . .

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In another minute and he would be behind the bars and Stuff would lock the gate and pocket the keys. . . .

No!

They must not have him again! A blessed resolve poured through his veins. He bent over farther and farther. . . . The thought of Mathilde flashed through his mind. . . . But already the heavy pack had glided forward and pulled him down and pressed him toward the water as with an iron fist. He wanted to utter her name. His hands struggled but found no resting-place. With a great cry of "No!" he was plunged into the white foam.

"Man overboard!" the marine roared at the top of his voice.

No one heard him. All were crowding forward, waving their caps and kerchiefs.

"Damn it! Man overboard!" The marine looked about for a rope or a life-belt. He found neither and raced up the stairs. On the upper deck he saw, far in the wake now, a head bobbing out of the water and behind it, swollen to a great size, a soldier's pack.

"Man overboard!" the marine roared toward the bridge. But the captain could not hear his voice because it was drowned by a song that came from many hundred voices:

"In the homeland, in the homeland,
There we shall meet again."

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